GOD'S PICKED YOUNG MEN

HENRY K. PASMA

God's Picked Young Men

BY

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TO
THEODORE AND TIMOTHY
AND THE OTHER SUNNY-FACED LADS
WHO, WITH GAY HEARTS AND LIGHT STEPS,
ARE, EACH NEW DAY, DRAW-
ING NEARER TO THE
LINE OF BATTLE

Dedicated

PREFACE

THE whimsical thoughts, set down in the chapters of this little book, were first caught and precipitated during the sunrise hours of summer mornings in the Old South. Hence, these pages on God's Picked Young Men were born in congenial surroundings; for the matin hours in the South are radiant with fanciful charms and golden promises of the things that are to be; are vibrant with the spirit akin to that which pervades the period of life when a man is young. The pearly gossamer of morning dew, rising and falling under the play of the young light that at that hour crowds down upon the green swells of the links hard by, often spoke of the Almighty Creator, who has made everything beautiful in its day; yet Nature, even in its most beautiful aspect and in its most gladsome moods, is unable to transcend the radiant glory, or outvoice the roseate promise which their Maker stored up in the lives of these young men of the past, whose souls had caught a stray ray of His own matchless glory, and who, therefore, never knew the hour of the fading light; who truly remained the Abiding Contemporaries—red-blooded and full of life—because God had these "young warriors of His as the dew of the morning."

It is in the hope that some stray whisp of their immortal spirit may have become woven into the woof and the warp of the text of these chapters, to inspire young men to place themselves in the way in which God may be able to train them for great lives, that these stories have been written.

HENRY K. PASMA

Charleston, Mississippi.

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God's Picked Young Men

Chapter I

THE YOUNG MAN GOD PICKED

THE men, who are to play the full game and the season's full schedule to defend the honor of their Alma Mater, are always picked men. Thus God has His picked men to defend His honor, to be glorious in their faith and their trust in Him. It is not God, therefore, who has made it possible for a young man to become an agnostic, a skeptic, or an atheist.

It is said, sometimes, that the religious doubts of young men in our day are insincere; that young men nowadays merely follow fashion; that they are imitators of older teachers who purposely deny the reality of the Christian faith; that young men today are copiers, imitators.

That is not true. Religious doubt, if not necessary, is nevertheless possible, even natural, in a young man. Its degree and intensity depend upon different factors, especially upon those of home-training and temperament. One person is possessed of a deeper emotional nature than another—is held in the grip of deep experiences faster and longer than his fellow. One young man has the advantage of religious training at home. His life has become moored to anchors which will hold in the squalls and the tempests that rock his soul in the storm-and-stress period of youth.

Another is not possessed of such advantages. He is easily swept from the right course. He is apt to become

a plaything in the hands of diverse opinions and doctrines, which, like a billow of the sea, is driven hither and yon, back and forth, by divers gales and storms; to be swept forth and back, not only during the days of his youth, but during the entire period of his life. Religious doubts, therefore, may be natural. In youth they are usually honest; but, after all, they need not envelop a young man's heart and mind in the winding-sheets of agnosticism.

Here is Abel, the young man God picked. He is the first young man who is placed before the Great Test. He is the first encouragement that emerges from a night of despair. He is the first young man who comes out victorious. He is the first young man who lives in an age of materialism, and who, in spite of his surroundings, is a believing young man. He is the first young man, who, in that far-away age of violence and unbelief, shows the splendor of young manhood when it enlists in the cause of God.

In our day, when many young men are brought under the sway of the teachings of the agnostic and skeptic, let us remember that this need not be the inevitable way of the young man. The first martyr, whose life-blood stained crimson the earth, was a young man. And God has written the name of Abel in illuminated script upon the roll of the young legionaries of faith in order that the young man of distant generations may read and remember.

The Greatest Young Man, Jesus, the Son of God, calls Abel righteous. More than forty centuries after, men still remember the name of Abel, not because he possessed the physical prowess of a prize-fighter, or could shoot poisonous intellectual barbs into the heart of that holy thing which lives and moves in the being of every young man, but because he believed God. Abel has a reputation which

is more lasting and is far more glorious than that of Alexander the Great or Jack Dempsey, or the little two-by-fours who are trying to imitate Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll.

In his struggle for moral and spiritual supremacy Abel had an advantage and a disadvantage. He had the advantage of living, chronologically speaking, nearer to the gates of a lost paradise than any other young man after him. Many a whisper of the lost knowledge of the truth still came through the bars of the fast-closed gates.

In the boyhood days of the lad, Abel sat upon the knees of his father and Adam was still able to recollect many of the lessons which he had learned, when in his state of rectitude, he had sat at the feet of the Great Teacher, God. The influence of sin must have erased many a beautiful thought from the mind of the parent, but from the tracings which his father remembered, the lad was able to conceive the ground-plan of the house of faith he was to build for himself. This was the advantage of Abel, that the source from which he had gained his knowledge had not become altogether polluted.

In a way Abel learned far more reliably than the college or university student of our day. Our scientific data have come to us by a long, roundabout way. Quite often scientific data are unreliable because they have come to us through the way of error. It is knowledge which has become distorted, because the minds, through which it percolated, were minds that refused to examine their findings in the light of the Highest Wisdom, God.

It is arrogant knowledge because it proclaims itself as based upon empirical knowledge and facts, and ridicules as untrustworthy the knowledge of religious faith; while it is much more scientifically honest to remember that, so

far, all scientific data are based upon postulates of faith. Hypotheses, quite often, are nothing more than bold guesses.

Abel was fortunate that he had received his knowledge from first-hand sources; that his teacher was the man who had walked with God in the cool of the garden, when God explained to him the wonders of nature, as far as the Almighty deemed it wise to reveal these mysteries to man, His creature; when God showed to Adam the marvel of His own character, and the wonder of the character of man as it reflected the nature of God.

And Abel's teacher was not arrogant. Rather, as he looked back to lost opportunities, he felt very humble. Humility, not arrogance, is the most acceptable frame of mind for the teacher when he attempts to explain the great works of God.

As the parent taught the lad, there was an eager wistfulness in the voice of the elder man. His great desire was that the lad might discover that which the mysterious power of sin had beclouded in his own mind. "It is necessary, my son," he would say, "to believe before you can know most fully."

The great advantage of Abel was, not only that his mind was being enriched by the mind of the man who had heard the very voice of God speak to him, but that he was taught by one who knew from rueful experience that the first thing necessary in the pursuit of the truth by man is the exercise of faith and trust.

As the eager eyes of the lad saw the painful expression upon the wistful face of him, who remembered so much, but did not remember all of the golden store of knowledge received from God, Abel, by faith, filled in the spaces and blanks where Adam was unable to teach. When Abel

reached young manhood he could build his life four-square and strong upon the foundation of that faith.

The great disadvantage of Abel is the advantage of the young man of today. Abel did not possess that which every young man today possesses, namely, the record of the lives which have been built upon faith. Agnosticism and unbelief are, therefore, inexcusable because man is in possession of the proofs of the value of religious faith. It is a record which runs back many centuries. It touches a variety of characters.

The final proof is always the same. It is this: that one great force has dominated and shaped for its best interests human life. That force is the dynamic of religious faith, as, in the welter and woe of a sin-disturbed human race, faith worked righteousness.

The Bible is not first of all a textbook of chemistry, or biology, or geology. It is first of all the record of the Great Experiment which the divine Alchemist performed in the laboratory of human life and experience, to show whether or not religious faith is able to establish that of which man is in far sorer need than the prowess of man's material conquest over the forces of nature, namely, the lives of righteous men and women; the cleansed minds and the clean lives, and the upward and forward look; the heart, touched by the redeeming love of God, and, therefore, the heart which burns with love for one's fellow-man. That is the paramount need of the ages. It is the great need of our day.

Abel was at a disadvantage here. He was a handicapped young man. He was situated as some of the greatest men of our nation were, for whom circumstances made it impossible to profit by book-learning and the teaching of university professors; but who, in spite of this handi-

cap in youth, nevertheless became great men because they possessed the education of the heart.

God has seen fit to include Abel's name in His Book in which stand written for our perusal, the experiments of the divine alchemy of human character. It is not strange that the great Teacher of young men chooses the life of a young man to head the list. It is the young life, based upon the foundation of religious faith, which yields to humanity and to God its best harvest.

The violent spirit of Abel's time, inspired by the growing power of sin, silenced the voice of this young prophet of the idealistic in the gore of his life-blood; but that does not matter. You cannot kill faith in blood. Abel, while dead, yet speaketh. Abel heads the long list of God's martyrs. He was followed by an innumerable multitude of young men, God's legionaries, clad in the shining armor of faith; young men, many of them educated young men, whose lives yielded most because they were young men who believed. God never makes a mistake when He chooses His picked young men.

Chapter II

THE YOUNG MAN WITH A HANDICAP

A YOUNG man need not despair of himself when he finds himself silhouetted in the light of the immortal character of the Model Young Man, Jesus. I don't know whether Jacob, as a young man, ever despaired of himself, of the many flaws apparent in the texture of his character. Jacob is the typical young fellow in his teens. He was ignorant of the handicap, the fearful handicap, of a perverse, crooked personality.

In his sin he considered himself a deal better than his rough, happy-go-lucky brother, Esau. He aspired to the position of priest in the household of his father. He considered himself the fit instrument to represent Isaac's family before the face of Holy God. He knew himself superior in wit to his blind old father, Isaac. His scheming mind equalled in astuteness that of his mother, Rebecca.

The young man, Jacob, had a double handicap. First, that he considered himself excellent above his fellows, and excellent in the eyes of the God of his father. Second, that he was ignorant that the very Jacob within him was a very crooked man. Jacob did not know God rightly. Jacob did not know himself. That is about the worst combination-handicap to weigh down the spirit-wings of a young man.

From the time this young man was a lad in his father's tent, God had hard work to keep His all-seeing eye upon

the seething processes going on in the soul of Jacob. With incredible speed the great shuttles that wove character and destiny for Jacob, flew forth and back. Only God could follow their course, could make out the patterns which this crafty, deceitful fellow attempted to weave into the woof and warp of his life.

God saw young Jacob, as, in his games with his mates, he would play dirt. Had Jacob lived in our day, he would have used his fists in a mass-play upon the football field. Upon the basket-ball court, when the eyes of the referee were not upon him, he would have tripped his opponent, or rammed his elbows into the ribs of the man playing opposite him.

Because of his genius for deceit Jacob would have revelled in the commercial opportunities of an industrial age like ours. His instinct for selfish gain, for self-aggrandizement, was powerful. Jacob could have sold his mother for a shoestring. He was very successful in driving his sharp bargain with Esau. He got his brother's soul cheaper even than Satan could have gotten it. He paid only with a mess of pottage.

He skillfully and easily fooled older and more experienced men than himself. The power of his own pride swelled his gorge as he "did" his old father. He played rings around his uncle, Laban, who himself was no amateur in the art of deception.

For a long time Jacob had no reason to despair of his handicap. But as the life of Jacob continued to race forth and back between the myriads of lives of the individuals of his day, God never lost sight of Jacob. That is the great encouragement which may come to a young man who is in despair—that the Captain of our souls is able to keep His eye upon each individual young man. The second

encouragement is this: that God purposely leads a young man into the depths of despair of himself.

God does it with Jacob. He is learning the first lesson which may lead a young man with a handicap to the uplands of moral and spiritual freedom. Jacob has been caught in the mazes of his own schemes. He must flee for his life.

Night comes on—but the thick armor of the criminal wards off the wholesome influences of Nature as these try to reach and touch his heart and conscience. His ears are stopped against the many voices of God with which He is speaking to man when the moan of the night wind begins to come over the heath. Still Jacob is unconcerned.

The hard stone is a soft pillow for his weary head. Momentarily his seething mind stops to concoct schemes. This is the moment for which God has waited. Jacob sees that which sometimes, in brief snatches of fleeting moments, has occurred likely to him; that God is not only in heaven, but that He is also upon the earth, that there is an unbroken line of communication between earth and heaven, that angels are descending and ascending—God amongst them.

His vision is a severe jolt for the self-complacent deceiver. He is startled from his sleep. As the stream of consciousness begins to flow back into its day-channels, the truth becomes terrifying. "How dreadful is this place! God is here, and I knew it not! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven!"

And Jacob, for the first time in his life, despairs of himself, as he begins to realize how he has played the fool under the very eyes of all-seeing God; when in God's own house, which is the earth, he has plied his nefarious trade. How poignantly he becomes aware of his handicap, as with his twisted and crooked character he must walk among the

very angels of God before the very eyes of the Almighty Himself!

His despair, if it did not immediately arouse his will to do better, nevertheless afforded Jacob a wholesome knowledge. He realized his handicap, and this brought him to despair. But, as gloom settled upon his soul, as God drew him into the presence of the great Ideal, in his despair Jacob caught sight of glorious possibilities. "This is the gate of heaven!" This life—the life of every young man. It holds forth possibilities of mighty glory, such as fit a young man to enter, by and by, the jewelled gates of the shining City, to walk upon the streets of pure gold.

The whole earth is full of God's glory. The flaming constellations wheeling overhead, above the fugitive from justice at Bethel, declare the presence of God. All the long day of our lives God is busy among us to show us the better thing. He paints the delicate shades upon the petals of the lily of the field, in order that, in the sordidness of sin, handicapped souls may have something to tell them how pure and beautiful their lives may become.

Even though by and by the biting winds of autumn tear to bits the colorful garment of Nature, and the drab of winter deepens our despair, yet, every new springtide God sets to work again, to fashion, to paint, to color, to place His copies of purity at every cross-road where the ways of men meet; and in the vacant sooty lots of the smoky city; and in the tin-can flower-pots which grace the grimy window-sill of the slum-dweller.

For a while, miserable, Jacob blunders along. But he is learning the lesson which God taught him at Bethel. He is not as wicked, he is not as deceitful, as before. He now has knowledge of his handicap, which stings him after each

misdeed. He now has the wistful knowledge of possibilities for the handicapped young man.

Finally he reaches the ford of Jabbok. There once more God flashes the glory of the Ideal before the eyes of the handicapped man. Then his knowledge of his own imperfection and the vision of possibilities caught at Bethel, all of a sudden burst the bonds of impotent despair. The handicapped, self-willed young man now becomes the God-willed man. The moral cripple *wills* that God shall heal him, bless him. And God never turns down that demand.

When a handicapped young man wills to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling God instantly works in him both to will and to do according to His own good pleasure. From this time on Jacob is a man who believes in God first, and then in himself.

A young man need not despair even though he has a handicap. God does what man doesn't dare to do. When He desires to tell all mankind about Himself, He does it in the following words: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and," yes, truly, "*the God of Jacob.*" God makes a man of the handicapped young man. He dares to take the risk. He is always successful.

Chapter III

THE YOUNG MAN WITH BACKBONE

IT IS not necessary for a young man to sow his wild oats. Sowing wild oats does not make for the best young men. It is against the law of nature. It is not scientific. The law is as old as the earth itself—that what you sow you will reap. The reaping of the harvest of wild oats yields neither pleasure nor profit. It is a back-breaking job, in the real physical sense of the word.

An abundant harvest of good grain may "make" a western land baron, as far as financial power is concerned, but a prolific harvest of wild oats will "break" the sower of it, as far as physical, mental, and spiritual power is concerned.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was not such an easy mark as to fall readily for an adage, which is outlawed in our day, but which was not so in his day. The sowing of wild oats constituted a real business in the days of Joseph's youth. Whole cities were given over to this sort of thing.

In Sodom and Gomorrah they had an all-year carnival of it. They had not even segregated districts in those days. The whole city constituted the field of wild oats. Men wasted their strength. They flung away their lives recklessly. They did not calculate to live long, for the vital statistics of Sodom and Gomorrah showed that the rate of mortality there was high.

Men, in the days of Joseph, were born with the curse in their bones. The sin which visits and kills, even unto the fourth generation, lay waiting in the sinuses of the brain of the new-born baby lad. The destiny of the little fellows was a fearful one—they were born to be Sodomites.

As the ancient sin reared successive generations, the wills of men became evermore honeycombed with black desire. Finally the moral stench of these cities rose up even into the nostrils of Almighty God Himself. As the great Harvester saw how the smut of Sodom and Gomorrah threatened to overrun the field of the world, He sent His angels of Fire to destroy the harvest of wild oats.

Even in such surroundings a young man need not necessarily do what the crowd is doing. Joseph did not. He was a young man who possessed both sense and backbone. In the midst of his lurid surroundings he kept his body clean. He was able to do this because he had first resisted the temptation to sow wild oats in his mind.

It is always thus—first the thought, and then the deed. First the sowing in the mind, and then the sowing in the body by the deed. First the spores of disease in the mind, and then the body gnawed away by the cancer of black death.

Joseph was one of those rare jewels which his Maker delights to look upon—a strong young man because the fountain-head of his being, his mind, had remained unpolluted. Joseph was pure-minded first. The foundation of his moral building was laid strong and intact without any flaw. That is the reason why he remained the upstanding man, no matter what were the vicissitudes of his life.

God and Joseph together began to construct his mind in a manner strong and lasting even in his boyhood days.

Some people would have called it religion—the state of mind of the lad Joseph. He himself called it God. In the cities it is called religion, because you can't see God very well between the grimy buildings and in the whirl of traffic.

But the country boy, Joseph, is a believing boy, because he can see and feel God everywhere. He sees the mighty hand of the Almighty push up the red ball of fire above the horizon, which stretches away beyond the steaming waters of Jordan. The sight of it fills the heart of the lad with admiration for the almighty power of the Partner of his life.

He sees the moving train of God's garment sweep by, as the cloud-shadows are chasing each other over the hills of Dothan. He hears the whispering voice of God at noon, when, to escape the heat of the midday sun he has laid himself in a cleft of the rock, where the zephyr blows softly upon the bony finger-tops of the mountain that feels its way into the valley below.

Or when upon the snow-crowned eminences of Tabor and Lebanon, the thunder clouds frown, and the voice of God is carried forth upon shafts of lightning, the lad, Joseph, listens reverently as the speech of the Almighty goes forth to the ends of the earth.

At eventide, as he lies upon his back in front of his father's tent, he sees the Great Hand fleck the velvet billows above him with silver, and the shining argosies of the stars sail by in stately formations; and the lad wonders what may be the mysterious cargoes with which the great Charterer has freighted the "ships that pass in the night." In this fashion God and Joseph together build the lad's mind.

His jealous brothers nicknamed Joseph a dreamer. He was not. Only, with the aid of his Partner, he was fashioning his mind to fortify his body against the great temptation of Egypt. These rude, immoral, wicked men, called the lad a silly little dunce, as, without fear, he stood before the ten of them, and recited what he had seen during the night. In reality, the vision which Joseph saw can be seen by every young man who is careful with regard to the construction of the framework of his mind.

The mind of Joseph, trained in the ways of purity, saw God's life plan with him. Blessed are the pure in heart, because God, their Partner, permits them to look over His shoulder as He is drawing the lines of their lives. They may know what He is planning to do with them. Joseph, because his mind was pure, knew God's plan with him.

His rude brothers delighted to call him a sissy. In reality, he was a contrast to their own blustering selves. Joseph, because of his God-knowledge, grew into the possession of a courage which comes only to men who love purity, honesty and the truth. Joseph's courage was sublime. You don't hear him cry out when his ruffian brothers cast him into a deep pit. You don't hear him whimper as he is sold for thirty pieces of silver, a slave. You don't hear him complain when he is falsely accused. You don't see him squirm when he is forced into the company of jailbirds and criminals.

Like the other Young Man, of whom Joseph is the type, he is supremely calm. He knows that a life which has been designed by God cannot miscarry. The glory of Joseph is the glory of faith in God, which never permits a man to go to pieces, which enables him to emerge unscathed, and rise to ever greater heights after each new calamity has done battle with his soul.

In Egypt the ancient sin finds Joseph invulnerable. He is not a ladies' man in the worst sense of the word, this Joseph. He is God's knight. He wields well his sword. He kills the dragon of lust. The combat strengthens his spiritual thews.

The butler thinks him a wonder as he interprets dreams while in prison. In one sense of the word Joseph is no wonder. The youth is growing into a man now. The mind, trained to look into the divine plan of its own life, is now able to look into the life of others. Joseph is growing into a prophet of God. He rises head and shoulders above the quack scientists of his own day, this country boy who first was willing to go to school with God.

Because of his high rank Joseph is a priest in Egypt. He tests the knowledge of the world. He does not despise it. He uses that which fits into the building God is constructing within him; and he realizes that the God-knowledge is far more excellent than the man-knowledge.

He is able to discern the future of a nation. He becomes the savior of the material treasure, of lives and property, of Egypt. He becomes the savior of the spiritual treasure of Israel. The God-consecrated life of this young man becomes the instrument whereby God's people are saved from death by famine, are saved from the lot of degenerating into a horde of wild nomads. Because Joseph is in Egypt, Israel's house is led there, to observe and absorb the good and the bad of a civilization highly developed, to be made potentially fit to become the bearers of the torch of truth.

Humanly speaking, Joseph became great because he had sense and backbone to resist the temptation to dive beneath the waters of the Dead Sea in quest of the submerged gardens of pleasure of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Had he yielded to the temptation, Joseph would have forfeited his future. God could have mended him and used him in His great scheme of things; but God delights to use and build with those who from the beginning consciously strive to keep pure their minds and their bodies. He likes to build His cathedrals with stones in which there are no flaws, His new human race with young men who have backbone, with young men who believe God rather than the devil, young men who permit God to fashion their character, "silently, imperceptibly, almost without the sound of hammer and saw," making their lofty character of moral granite "blossom forth into an eternal flower."

Chapter IV

THE YOUNG MAN WHO BELIEVED IN SPITE OF HIS EDUCATION

AN EDUCATED young man need not become a snob when it comes to a consideration of the value of religion. He need not become an impostor who uses his education, as a robber uses his jimmy, to take forcefully and unlawfully from society that which he is not willing to earn by the sweat of his brow. He need not consider his education and use it as a wheelbarrow in which he rides to a soft snap. After all, an educated young man may become first of all a God-man, and then a useful man amongst his fellows. Moses was all of that.

Moses remained a learner for a long time. He was that for forty years. That would mark him in our eyes as a bit slow. Our foolish age speaks of forty as an age when a man must have reached the summit. Foolish mothers teach foolish, marriageable daughters to gauge a young man's capacities by the speed he has attained at twenty-five. They are afraid of forty in a man, unless at that age he has scorched the highway to the peak, even though in the process of doing it he has ruined his morals.

But a young man can afford to take his time—if he is like Moses. At forty Moses stood at the foot of the mountain; but then there were eighty years of his real life-work before him; eighty years crammed with such deeds, with such achievement, with such dynamic, that every genera-

tion after Moses has felt the shock of the impact of his character, as this strong young man of forty hurled himself into the life of human kind.

One can afford to be young at forty and play, if he puts in a full day of eighty years afterward; and at one-hundred-and-twenty he may, with undimmed eye and unabated strength, be still at it furiously, when God takes off the harness and says, "It is enough." That is quite different from the men who are burned out at forty; who spend another ten years hunting scandal before their contemporaries are glad to tuck their rotten bodies away in a little two-by-six container.

Moses had all the chance to become an ultra modern young man, as one may be today. He was the adopted son of the queen of one of the most powerful and civilized nations of his day. A fine education, ease, wealth, luxury, prestige, power; the mysteries of religion, the mysteries of philosophy, the mysteries of a highly developed science lost since, the "pleasures of sin for a season"—all these Moses might have had if he had chosen.

We know very little of these first forty years of the young man's life. He himself, as in the desert of Midian he writes his autobiography, describes these years in one short line, "When Moses had grown up." That is all. Many a young man, for reasons, doesn't care to write the record of the years of his youth. It is not for such reasons that Moses is brief; for this educated young man is not a snob when it comes to religion, and does not express that snobbishness in a profligate life. Moses is content with only five words for himself, and lets God have the rest of the space.

But the great significance of the prolonged youth of Moses is this: that, like any other young man, he was placed

before the great choice of his life. Life-choices do not generally come after forty. For this reason the early years are important. This educated young man who had grown up in the midst of the enticement of the land of sin, was placed before the choice of remaining the son of the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh. It meant an easy life, a soft snap, luxurious living. It meant that mind, body, and soul, Moses could have his own way. It meant that which some young men consider the legitimate prize of their education—money and an easy life.

It was fortunate for Moses that he was not only the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, but that he also was the child of the Hebrew, Amram, and his wife, Jochebed; that in the hour of temptation he saw not only the glamour of the Egyptian palace, but also the interior of the humble dwelling which whispered to his heart the word "home."

That very thing has helped many a young man to choose rightly. The words of a mother, whispered into the ears of a small lad, have been at once the ballast which saved the ship from capsizing in the sudden squall; the compass, by which the young man might steer straight upon the right course when sailing in a fog; the loadstar that drew him unto "the land that is afar off."

It was Jochebed and her influence upon his boyhood days which saved Moses from that which is worse than pestilence, the snobbishness of an educated young man, when it comes to the consideration of religion. Not all the advanced learning of the priests and scientists in the Egyptian temples was able to induce Moses to break away from the anchors of the true faith to which his mother had bound his heart.

I think that is the matchless glory of Moses's life, that, even though he was an educated young man, he neverthe-

less could be a believing young man. It was *by faith* that Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

That does not mean that at the time of his choice Moses was a full-fledged believer. God is willing to take on a young man, even though he is a diamond in the rough —but there must be the diamond-stuff, faith.

At forty Moses is still backward. His noble, but uncontrolled impulses, lead him to kill a man. Killing men never yet led a people from bondage. God shows Moses a far more excellent way. The educated young man is sent by God to the backwoods to get rid of some of his education.

As God has done many times before with others, He now sends Moses to the desert to train him. A desert it is, in many respects. No books, no culture, no people, no civilization. An educated dude would have cried out, "I'm dying out here!" He would have closed his eyes and have died mentally, morally, and spiritually; but when Moses can see no books, no associates, no culture, no civilization, he does not close his eyes to die.

Out in the backside of the Midian desert the educated man sees what one does not easily see within the walls of the university or college lecture-room. Moses sees the burning bush, which burns with fire, and which, nevertheless, is not consumed. And in the burning bush Moses sees God. And from the burning bush comes the real education, comes the true knowledge of God who is the I AM.

Now Moses knows that which the scientists of Egypt could have taught him, but did not teach—that God is; that

He always is; that He is eternally; that He is with, and speaks to, every generation of mankind; that He speaks to the individual; that He seeks the young man, even in the backside of the Midian desert, to make him His instrument, to use him greatly. And if there ever had been anything of the snob in Moses, the sight of the burning bush and that which it contained, knocked it out of him permanently. The educated man became an humble man. He pulled off his shoes like any other young man ought to do, because the ground on which he treads is holy ground.

From now on Moses is an instrument that God can use. How mightily God uses a young man who is not a snob! He can be of all the great men of the world the greatest. He can be the greatest patriot, the greatest lawgiver, the greatest statesman, the greatest military commander, the great man of God.

Historians are queer people. In trumpet-tones their books proclaim the great things. Sometimes they mention God—because it is difficult to eliminate the Absolute Great One from history. Quite often they mention a daughter of Pharaoh; but they usually omit to state the fact that in the making of the real young man it is not the Egyptian princess in her palace on the heights that is saving the world from its worst plague, the educated snob who snubs religion, but the humble cottage-dwellers in the valley, the Amrams and Jochebeds, who make it possible that the educated young man may also be a believing young man.

Chapter V

THE YOUNG MAN WHO DARED GOD

GIDEON was the Hebrew George Washington. He was a young man of many good parts whom God used as the liberator of the oppressed Israelites. It was not due to his times or to his environments that Gideon became a young man of good character. A period of time when every man in Israel did "what was good in his own eyes" is more likely to tear down than to build up the moral uprightness of a young man.

It was a time when the other fellow which is in each one of us would have revelled; a time when the beast grows in a young man, when he himself damns his own soul and body beyond possibility of redemption. Humanly speaking, Gideon had not a ghost of a chance to grow up a self-respecting youth, let alone, to become a power to uplift his community, or the instrument of the Almighty to become the deliverer of a nation.

Gideon's time was the transition period in the national life of Israel, from a state of haphazard government to that of a constitutional monarchy based upon law and order. The ways of God are strange and beyond searching. Because of their backslidings from God, swarms of enemies infested the land of the Israelites. They reduced the population to starvation and impotency. The harvests which the Israelites sowed were reaped by the enemies.

There was not a place where a sword for defense could be forged, or a spear-head sharpened. At the neck of the valley of Esdraelon were the smithies under enemy control, where the Israelite might have his plowshare ground to be able to prepare the harvest for the foreign invader. And although the Israelite, in his impotent rage, cried out to the God whom he had forsaken for deliverance, his very misery rendered him impotent to set right about face to attack the source of all national trouble—the individual wayward heart.

That is the drawback of serving sin: it begets for one not only misery and bondage, but its wage comes with compound interest in that it strips one of power to escape its resulting misery. It is for this reason, that, humanly speaking, the case of the down-and-outer is so hopeless. He cannot beget power to arise because he is pulling himself down.

In the very home town of Gideon the downtrodden people had built an altar for the service of Baal, where they indulged in the immoral service of the foreign god, and where they danced the dance of death. It is really remarkable that a young man could survive in an atmosphere like that.

Gideon's case is a remarkable case. He appeared to have everything against him—times of national humiliation and shame, and moral decrepitude. Gideon had neither rank nor station to give him the prestige which commands a following in the important hour. When God told him of His plan Gideon was struck at once with the oddity of the situation. "I am poor, and of the poorest family in Manassah," was his objection to God's proposal.

Not yet was he daring God. He only gave evidence of a mind unspoiled by ambitious designs and a false confi-

dence in himself. Gideon gave evidence of the supreme characteristics of the man God can use and God can make great; the man whose first characteristic is humility, and whose second is obedience and willingness to go at the word of God.

God had made no mistake when he picked Gideon to pull Israel out of the mire. The very thing in which Gideon was engaged at the time God met him marked him as the young man of God. He had done the unbelievable thing. He had raised a harvest, when enemies, like swarms of locusts, were infesting the land—the very hillsides, and the fields, and the vineyards, and the gardens of the Israelites. He had courage to thresh the grain under the very eyes of the despoilers. He had ingenuity to plan for a source of subsistence for himself and his father's house, against the time when the Midianite hordes should begin to shear the land of its substance. He planned to hide the grain.

Gideon realized that crying unto the Lord is not all-sufficient. Deliverance is not wrought that way. In the great enterprise of human affairs it has not been God and His angels, but always God and man, who have effected things. If Israel was to be delivered, it must be, not only God, but God and Gideon who were going to do it. That was the foundation of Gideon's generalship, that he understood the fundamental principle of God's method in His work with man.

Not being possessed of means is no handicap for a young man. Not having the magic of prestige is no handicap for a young man. If only he catches sight of the outlines of God's plan with him—co-operation between God and himself—he may "run with his God through a troop; with Him he may leap over a wall. Though an host en-

camp against him, his heart shall not fear; though war should rise against him, in this will he be confident."

There is no telling to what limits a young man may go when he works in co-operation with his God. There is no telling how great a poor young man may become when he is willing to go to work with the power his Partner is daily pouring into his being.

God first tries out Gideon. He tells him to tear down the thing of shame in his father's village—the altar of Baal. He does it, fearlessly; not, as I think, because this young man, living in times of violence and lawlessness, was schooled in the business of deviltry; but because Gideon loved God, and that implies love for the good, and the pure, and the holy, and the righteous things of life.

When Gideon has stood the test well, God calls him to higher tasks. He is to rise to be the head of the nation. God is to make Gideon's name immortal. He is to give him a place amongst the undying heroes of God. That God plans to do with the poor youth who stands the test.

And herein again Gideon gives evidence of granite qualities of character. He dares God to be in earnest, to be sincere. He dares God to perform a miracle in behalf of Gideon. That is high, spiritual courage, not brazen effrontry. It is not shallow curiosity, but prayerful attitude of mind.

Gideon faints at the sight of his task, his fame, his glory. He asks God to fill him with His own strength, His own glory, His own power, when, in the sheepskin spread out under the dome of night, Gideon's hands shall touch the hands of God, and his empty self shall become filled with the fullness of divine energy.

God generally takes a man to a generalship by way of West Point or Annapolis. With a Gideon He can afford to

take a short cut. In times like Gideon's, with young men like Gideon, the Almighty promotes overnight. "For God and Gideon" is the battle cry of the trained soldier of the ranks and of the general leading the armies of God. "For God and Gideon" will bring a young man far. It will bring him all the way.

It will more than enable him to realize the purpose of his life. With his divine Partner by his side, he will bring about confusion and disaster among the forces of evil, and build the kingdom of God. And the glory of the young man will be the glory of the older man, and the glory of the man of God, who by and by lays down his armor, and passes through the gates into the City of Peace.

His great achievement has not spoiled him. When his grateful countrymen wish to crown him with power, like Gideon, he declines, and gives all the credit to his Partner, the glory to his God.

Chapter VI

THE YOUNG MAN WHO HEARS

RAILROAD engineers on fast trains begin to complain of the nerve-racking experiences which they must face almost daily because the public does not hear. Automobile accidents at railroad crossings were numbered by the thousands last year. They represent a large death toll; strikingly large, when you remember that almost all of these accidents were preventable, were unnecessary.

At every railroad crossing the white-armed signal stands conspicuous, "*Stop, Look, Listen!*" The trouble with many people is that they are not a whit superior to their automobiles. Their uncontrollable mania for speed drives them on heedlessly, unmindful of destination and goal, and without a competent driver and good brakes. If the men whose machines were wrecked and whose lives were snuffed out in these accidents at railroad crossings, had come to themselves and thought for one moment, they would not have come to grief. The thing that kills in many different ways is the inability of men to listen and to think.

Samuel is the young man who hears, and who is, therefore, placed in the way of learning to think. It is no fault of his that he does not hear correctly at first. It is a great achievement even to be able to be startled from drowsiness and sleepiness by voices all around us that try

to reach our ear; to become awakened when the voices of good-will are speaking to us.

When the Best Voice speaks it is not always with the sound of thunder. It is the silent voices of God which are most penetrating. The beauty of the lily is a voice of God which is inarticulate. The limitless expanse of the sea, the vast glory of its surface of molten glass, or the purple sheen of red sunset upon the heaving swells of the ocean, speak with an inaudible voice. The flaming constellations, wheeling overhead upon their tracks of fire, yet speak with the silent voices of God.

There is a Voice which whispers when dusk sets upon the greensward; and again when the crimson lips of the dawn of day move and pronounce the name of the faithful Creator. At all the crossings upon the highway of life God has His spokesmen, his warning signals, *Stop, Look, Listen.* And God is even more painstaking in His efforts to prevent accidents than the railway companies, because God has a voice speak even *within* man, in his conscience.

God's voices, which speak to a young man, are strangely fashioned. There was the voice of Samuel's mother in the voice of God which spoke to the lad in the tabernacle at Shiloh. Scientists nowadays largely discount prenatal influences in the formation of the character of the child. This, of course, is an easy way of doing away both with the perplexing fact of the perverseness of human nature, and the fact which is no less perplexing, the providence of God.

However, many of God's picked young men were influenced by a saintly mother even before their birth into life. The mother of Samson influenced the character of this strange young man. The mother of Samuel influenced the character of the young man who can hear. The mother

of John the Baptist influenced the character of the young man who is to open the portals of men's hearts in order that the King of Glory may enter in. And the mother of Jesus knows, even before His birth, who and what He is to be; and in the days before His coming the mind of Mary is busy with the Babe, who in His flesh is to reveal the glory of God; whose soul, mind, and body, is to be the pattern of the new man created in God.

I think there is no young man whose life and character is not influenced by the voice of his mother which spoke to him even before his birth. There is no young man, placed in the noisy roar and amid the confusing voices of a pleasure-mad world, who may not depend upon the voice of God speaking to him in the voice of his mother.

Her unseen presence follows him into the drab dullness of the boarding-house and the vast lonesomeness of the city. His mother's voice speaks within him, counsels, and advises, and comforts, during the first strange days in the college dormitory, when the pull of the old home is terribly strong upon the young lad; when at night there is a lump in his throat as four strange walls stare down upon him with cold indifference.

It is God's voice which speaks to a young man through the voice of his mother within him, and which fires his ambition; which makes him desire to stay white when he doesn't know as yet the dirtiness of moral filth. It is God's voice which bids him hear when it speaks to the young man through the voice of his mother, in his college examinations, or in his work in shop and office, as he toils mightily for the prize of a high calling, and some demon shows him the easier way, the dishonest short cut, the dark

way of the human rat who tries to tunnel-in his way under through the foundations.

God's way of speaking to young Samuel is not so miraculous after all. It is the way He speaks to every young man. Blessed is he who hears the voice of his mother as God uses it within him; who stops, looks, and listens, before he takes the next step; who has learned the way, and who has trained himself in the difficult art of thinking of what his mother would say of his choices and his actions.

God speaks to a young man through his body. A young man's body is a great thing. It is something altogether apart by itself. It is different from the body of a babe in which the fires have not yet been kindled. It is different from the body of the graybeard in which the flames have died out.

The body of a young man is a magnificent thing. It is a temple in which there may be the sweetness of the fragrance of incense, and the stateliness of worship, and the self-effacement in adoration, and the melody of music, and the fervor of prayer. It may be the oratory in which abides the sweet Singer of God, where His own Spirit fashions the life of the young man in the rhythm of poetry.

The body of a young man is a thing of tremendous power. The results of its energies are greater by far than those of all the things which the brain of the inventor produced. For the mechanism of the body of a young man is not driven by the power of steam or electricity, but by very life itself. It can perform deeds which reach out farther than the skin of a man, which go further than the lips of his mouth and the roof of his palate.

The deeds of the body need not become coffined in a material mold. The acts performed by the body of a young man may reach out and warm the heart of his neigh-

bor, and of his fellow beings, even unto the distant parts of the earth. The deeds which a young man's body may perform are not scrapped and cast on the junkheap when his body rests for a while from its earthly labors; but his deeds follow him into the other life.

God speaks in that wonderful body of a young man by mouth of His angels of service; but Satan also causes his voice to be heard in that body, when the scavenger-dogs of lust and passion and sensuality yelp and whine. Blessed is the young man who stops often, to look, listen, and think, when that glorious body of his is a-tremble with the confusion of discord; who, as God speaks through his body, answers, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"; who presents his body "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," which is his reasonable service.

God's voice speaks through the mind of the young man. That voice comes even clearer than the voices of God which come through his body. It is in his mind that a young man may resemble God most. It is the most important part of a young man.

The young man Samuel had his mind trained early to hear the voice of God. That is the outstanding characteristic of God's picked young men, that early in their lives they train themselves to be on the alert for the voice of their Master. It is very important that a young man accustom himself to hear God speak, and to distinguish the voice of God from other voices.

It requires careful, faithful, intense training. It is much the same as with the education, the training, of a great musician. Young Beethoven's musical mind was not trained in a dancehall to the sound of the sensuous jangle of modern jazz, but to the strains of oratorios and the majestic cadences of the masterpieces of great musicians.

It is in his mind that the young man may resemble God in His almighty power. The reason why the lives of some young men resemble the picture of a wreck rather than of God, is, that their minds are disordered minds, unused and untrained to the voice of God.

Business psychology teaches the necessity of first knowing the laws which govern the human mind. If a young man knows these laws there is no limit to his power or his success. There are no horizons to his future. But it is not psychology, primarily, that will make a young man conscious of and conversant with the dynamic power of his mind. It is only when a young man's feet are set upon the clean way that he may approximate unlimited mental power.

The standard textbook of psychology is the Word of God, the Bible. It represents the cross-section of the mind of man for over four thousand years. In it are the pictures of minds that were lawless, and the pictures of the ruin which they caused. In it are also the pictures of young men whose minds were well ordered, because they had sat in God's clinic, where He showed them the mind of the young man as it is, as in a psychology class you are shown a human brain; when God showed them the pitfalls which are in a young man's mind, and the mental grooves which lead away from true wisdom.

And there God showed them how He can cleanse the mind of the young man and erase pitfalls and errors; how He, who creates the brain, can also create a new mind, if young men will believe and follow up the rules which He has put down in His great textbook of psychology. All God's really great young men, Samuel included, listened to God and believed Him. Because they had respect unto all God's commandments, therefore were they not put to shame.

Chapter VII

THE TOP-HEAVY YOUNG MAN

IN THE construction of a building the walls of the foundation are made very massive and thick. Upon the foundation walls are built the successive stories, and the walls of these are less thick in proportion as they go up. The top-story walls are the least heavy of all. If the manner of construction of the building were reversed, if the foundation walls were only a brick and a half thick, and the fifth-story walls were constructed with the thickness of an ordinary foundation, the building could not stand very long, if it stood at all. It would collapse even before it was finished.

In the construction of character it is also necessary to take pains that the building is drawn up according to the law of proportion. A young man may be top-heavy, as far as his body is concerned. He may even become top-heavy when he puts too much care upon the development of his mind, when he neglects the care of his body. He may forget that he is to build in three proportionate dimensions—body, mind, and soul. He may even neglect the last. There is sure to be a collapse, if the law of true proportion is neglected; a collapse, either in time, or in eternity.

Samson was a young man whose building plan was made ready for him even before he was born. God has

ready the plan of the life of every young man; only, in this was Samson privileged above his fellows, in that the Angel of God had given to his mother the special blueprints of the character of the son she should bear; while God bids other young men to build according to His general plans, which, after all, are particular enough: "Wherewithal shall the young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

According to that general plan God bids every young man to build; and in proportion to the zeal, consecration, and devotion, of the young builder arises the building, differing from others in its degree of beauty and perfection; but the ground-plan is God's; it is unvarying.

The great task to which Samson was called was easier by far than that of many another young man who gropes in the dark for many years without being able to discern the definite, divinely ordered task of his life. From the day of his birth Samson was dedicated to the performance of a special task. "He shall begin to deliver Israel."

It is, therefore, strange that for the greater part of his life Samson should appear as a flaming comet, which, rushing through the heavens, seems to have broken away from its ordained tracks. The young man for whom God has taken special pains to draw up his life-plan, with every particular filled in, and who, because of this special providence of God, can afford to show great poise, and confidence, and calmness, is, nevertheless, a young man who is restless,—restless as a billow of the sea, which is driven hither and yon by every gale which blows, without, perhaps, once in a century to reach and break upon a definite shore.

There are scores of young men like that. You find them in college, in the office, or in the store, in the factory, or

upon the farm. They are like a magic ball of energy, rolled up tightly, bouncing back and forth, up and down.

In the college dormitory, in his room, this college Samson for a moment furiously pounces upon his books; then, as a shouting troop of his fraternity brothers passes his door, he flings his books aside and rushes after them, to pass the evening and half of the night in places where students do not study.

In the office and store this typical Samson does not make headway for the simple reason that the office and store for him are the places where he rests from his nightly rovings, or where the baseball or prize-fighting news keep him in a state of perpetual excitement.

If engaged as a factory hand, he flits from one shop to another. He is a good hand, and willing and strong; but foremen say of him that he is not steady, and for that reason he is never called higher up.

On the farm he is able to do prodigious stunts, especially during such times as harvesting and threshing, when there is the stimulus of a great crowd of admiring neighbors. Then he is great in valor and strength; but when he must follow the gang-plow during fall plowing, the spirit of unrest comes upon him, and he argues that the city has many advantages over the country. If he is told to plow with a team of horses he rants all day about the delights of a tractor. He is absolutely worthless at the prosaic task of the dairy-stable, and even less so when he is called upon to hoe the garden.

This modern Samson is only then somewhat at ease, when, driven around town by a fair Delilah, he can loll in the soft upholstery of a limousine. However, the depths of an automobile seat is a rank place for a young man to take his training. Young men, generally, do not *ride* to

success. The way up is more gruelling than the scaling of one of your he-mountains, the cruel scramble around steep and treacherous shoulders, the wearying slipback of the foot upon the eternal snows, and the unsafe footing upon the slippery flanks of the glacier.

The trouble with the descendants of Samson is that they are top-heavy. They are mostly top-heavy in their body. There are young men, walking God's green earth today, with bodies like mountains; but what, if a mountain gets out of control?

Samson's body was a thing more glorious than your high-powered automobile. God had built it the body of a *Maschir,* a Nazarite. At the critical moment, when the most supreme effort was required, Samson's body did not stall because of the downpull of poisonous liquor or drugs. God built Samson's body superb, unspoiled; but Samson made it top-heavy.

The underpinning of mind and soul was lacking. Samson's mind was a cunning mind, but it was not a mind that, growing stronger and stronger, setting pace for the body, continued to develop under the breath of God's Spirit. You never hear Samson talk with God. It is only in a desultory, spasmodic way that God talks with Samson, when, at rare intervals, His Spirit comes upon him.

The young man, with a strong body, who never talks with God, is a doomed young man. Paul advises the young man, Timothy, "Keep thyself pure." That is the advice of a master-builder who knew. If the body gets on top Samson is undone. He will seek for Delilah instead of God. He will begin to think that the real joy is the enjoyment of the body only.

The young man who lives only for bodily enjoyment is being delivered to his worst enemies. They will gouge

out his spiritual eyes. They will make him slave out his weary existence in the monotony of his fleshen prison. He has ceased to be a power. He now becomes the butt of ridicule. He is a toy in the hands of his enemies.

The soul of young Samson, instead of leading his nation up to the highway of glory, like a high-powered machine of which the driver lost control, is ditched, and lies crushed under a crumpled mass of wreckage.

It is really wonderful what God can do with a mass of wreckage, like that of Samson when he got top-heavy through the excesses of the body. God alone knows that there is always a *soul* somewhere under the ruins of a young man's life. When the fangs of the enemies of his body, of self-inflicted pain and disease, tear out his flesh; when that soul begins to realize that not in the enjoyment of the body is a young man's strength, but that *the joy of the Lord is his strength*—when a young man will repent and become a believing young man—God can even then use him.

It is not because his hair begins to grow again that Samson grows victorious over the enemies of God. It is because his mind and his soul begin to grow and to reach out to God, that Samson recovers strength. It is the faith-filled soul of Samson, not his maimed, spoiled body, which even in the moment of his great victory lies in ruin, that wreaks vengeance upon the enemies of God's people. The greatest victories of a young man are not those of the body, but are always those of the soul—the victories of faith.

Chapter VIII

THE YOUNG MAN WHO WAS GOD'S "RED-NECK"

THERE are many young men who, to all appearances, have little chance to make out well. They have not lost out while they were trying to keep up with their companions in the competitive race for place. They were handicapped from the start in that they were denied any chance at all to try.

David, the son of Jesse, did not have a chance to try out for anything worth while. There are great opportunities for the other sons of Jesse. Samuel, the prophet, as he nears Bethlehem on his divine mission, knows that there is not a family in that Judean village that will have as splendid a chance offered it as the house of Jesse. From among the eight sons of the Bethlehemite, God is to provide Himself a king. It is a big chance—one out of a million; but the big chance is denied David. David is of little account in the family of Jesse.

When Samuel, through whom God is making the choice, arrives at Jesse's home, there are seven young men, all likely candidates for the great honor, for they are handsome and stalwart young men, whose physical stature appeals mightily to the man of God; but David is daily kept at a mean bit of chore. He is only a shepherd. He is a "red-neck," as in some localities townfolks nickname the youth from the hill-country.

The story of the rise of David, the son of Jesse, however, ought to inspire every young man who has been denied the chance to try out himself. Of whatever physical beauty David's brothers may have been possessed, as they passed before the face of Samuel, God told the prophet rather plainly that they were lacking in the essentials which make a king.

As David was brought before Samuel, the shepherd-lad already was a king in miniature. The lad, who has not had even the slightest chance to make out, may nevertheless be possessed of qualities of character which make for the highest degree of usefulness. And God ordinarily brings around the opportunity whereby these characteristics can be developed.

The reason why David did not go the drab way of many young men who apparently have no chance, is, that even in the impossibility of his surroundings he made out wondrously well. David did not say to himself, "A young man in my circumstances is foredoomed to 'die unwept, unhonored, and unsung.' If I only had money to take me through high school and college, I'd be happy and make out well; but what chance has a country-lad like me?"

David never spoiled his own disposition and the possibility of a career by whining and self-pity. Even while he was herding his father's sheep in the back country of Judea, among the rocks and the clefts, over the broken country south and east of Bethlehem, the lad kept his eyes open. The fact which saved David from future ignominy was that he was ever on the alert.

David was always a student. God sees to it that every young man, but especially the one who has no chance, is surrounded by a college and university curriculum. Out

there, upon the lonely field, the lad who was to be a king, began the study of the grandest subject, God.

Out there, among the lonesome hills, God was making of this shepherd-lad a great poet. You may know in how far David learned to see, in the best sense of the word, when you read those exquisite bits of nature poetry penned by the lad whom God was training for a kingship. They are recorded in the eighth, and the nineteenth, and the twenty-ninth, and other psalms.

His poetic eye does not only discern the warp and the woof, the color and texture, of the fabric of nature, but he is observing completely, as he is seeing the great Artificer behind it all, who is mindful of man, and who delights to fellowship with His creatures, whom He is giving the chance to become but a little lower than the angels of God, to be crowned with glory and honor.

You notice, how the lad, of whom others said that he had no chance at all, in reality had the biggest chance. And the most encouraging thing about it all is, that David was fully aware of the fine chances God extended to him. From the ignominy of a shepherd-lad he can climb to a position but a little lower than that of the inhabitants of heaven. There is a great reward for the young man who is possessed of the open eye. It prevents false modesty and a false estimate of opportunities. It saves a poor young man from whining away the finest chance which God offers him. It saves him from killing despondency.

His brothers called the shepherd-boy a "red-neck." As Samuel first looks upon him he is of a ruddy countenance. The winds which sweep in from the wilderness of Kadesh have blown upon his cheek a ruddy glow. The sun of Canaan has bronzed his features; but withal, as he stands there in his stained tunic, his shepherd's crook in his hand,

his sling slung over his shoulder, Samuel instinctively realizes that this is one of God's picked young men. David has already outstripped the polished Eliab, and Abinadab, who are familiar with the ways and the manners of the city. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

The shepherd-lad is anointed king. From that time on he is aware of a Mighty Power which holds him by the hand, which leads him on, which fills him. He has not yet come into his kingdom—not yet by far; but the Great Consciousness never forsakes him. God has anointed him for a great task. He never forgets this—as no young man should ever forget it. The throne, the place of power, is still far off; in fact, God sends David back to the sheepcote; but David never forgets. He is ever the young man with the open eye.

In his impossible surroundings he remains the student of the finest things. He learns to see God more clearly every new day. He finds God in the impossible—in the flock of sheep which is following at his heels. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." That is more than all the poets combined, before David, had ever said of God. It is the shepherd-lad, who has no chance, who is seeing this, who is stating the fact, the grandest fact for man to believe and experience.

David learns about God when, from the Judean desert, the great storm-clouds come rolling up; when "the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." And David is saying to himself, after the grand spectacle has passed by, "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

David continues to learn about God and His wonderful providence, when the zephyrs shake the washed-blue folds of the blossom-garment that lies upon the flax fields; or when upon the hillsides flame the purple or bright yellow lilies with such glory as by and by will excite the envy of the great son of David.

And the conception of God which this young man with the open eye gains, becomes complete. God is the *living* God. And that living God is David's God. Because of this knowledge, the shepherd-lad easily stands the withering scorn, the biting sarcasm of the magnificent Eliab, when he derides the plan of his young brother to do battle with the giant.

Because of his complete knowledge of God, David knows more and is able to do more than the combined armies of Israel drawn up in battle array against the Philistine. He knows that it is impossible that Goliath can defy the armies of the *Living God,* as David has seen Him, and worshipped Him, among the hills of Judea.

By faith in the Living God David slays the giant. By faith David keeps in sight his lofty calling in the perilous and weary days of his exile. It is by faith that David finally ascends the throne. It is wonderful what faith may accomplish for a young man of whom people say that he has no chance.

Finally this young man, who had no chance, and who made so much of that negation, as he has grown old, learns to know God in a still more beautiful aspect of His character. Sudden temptation makes the aged David spoil the magnificent record of his God-ordained life. But even though he plunges deep from the eminence of moral integrity and glory, he immediately arises to even more lofty and beautiful heights of faith in God.

David is an oriental monarch. The life of the prophet, Nathan, who fearlessly points out his heinous crime to him, is in his hands. Ordinarily that prophet would have been handed over to the executioner, because of his audacity in upbraiding a king. Not so at the hands of David. The man who, as a lad, learned to make so much out of the impossible, now lets God make a beautiful thing out of the impossible of a spoiled life. The righteous character of David lies in pieces. Let every young man read that which no poet before David ever wrote of God and man. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

The fifty-first psalm is the finest portrait of God which man ever painted. God is the forgiver of sin. He is the repairer of men and women whose characters and lives lie broken in pieces through sin. God remakes David, greater than the king of Israel who leads victorious armies against God's foes. He makes him king over his own heart, which God has purged with hyssop and has made clean; which God has washed and made whiter than snow. His last was the best chance that came to David—to become a saint of God.

Chapter IX

THE YOUNG MAN WHO WAS AN HEIR

AN HEIRESS is a very much sought after person because that which an heiress represents appears to be the highest ideal of some young men, who do not belong to God's picked young men. The designing young man, who is on the lookout for an heiress, has missed the best thing which life holds out to youth—pure, unfeigned, sincere love.

The calculating young man, who is looking past the object of his search—who is looking at the wealthy father of the young woman whose fortune he wishes to obtain for himself through a civil procedure called marriage, is an anomaly, a freak of nature.

He does not belong to the class in which the accident of birth has placed him—the generation of youth. His cunning mind has early out-stripped his body and his heart. He rather belongs to the toothless class, with the spare, leather-like features and the clawlike hands—the class of the old miser, whose avarice has ruthlessly stripped life of its blossoms and fragrance, and who has incarcerated himself in a prison-house of gold.

The type of young man, who has the designing, crafty mind of the old miser, exercises a depressing influence upon the mind. It shows up too luridly man in his worst aspect; but the genuine young man is an object of vast inspiration.

He does not seek to sneak his way to success through swamp and morass. He takes the highroad which leads to the summit and the sunlight. He is unselfish, courageous, honest. When the great thing, life, is before him, he chooses his mate, not necessarily blindly and foolishly, but nevertheless prompted by the chivalrous spirit of the knight of old and of the true lover. Genuine youth is the most glorious ideal done in flesh and blood.

Solomon, the son of David, is both fortunate and unfortunate. Because he is an heir there is awaiting at his door an unsurpassed opportunity to make of life a great thing. There is also the chance to make of life the worst thing—to only loaf through it. The mighty valor of his warlike and hardy father, David, has made ready for Solomon the greatest empire of his day. There is a great army of seasoned veterans. There are great generals to lead the armies. There are wise councilors in the council chamber. There is the atmosphere of power and prestige. There is also the beginning of the downward road—pomp and display.

The young man, who is the sole master of these material treasures, the absolute master over the lives of millions of his subjects, as he senses the great opportunity and the grave responsibility, begins well. He is a believing young man. At the beginning of his reign he is a praying young man, and for a while everything goes well. Solomon diligently tends to his great duties. The careful exercise of his powers increases his wisdom.

While still a young man, his fame travels beyond the boundaries of his own country. Kings and queens seek his advice. The intoxication of wealth has not yet swept him off his feet. His instincts are still democratic. He is approachable for the poor. He judges their cause right-

eously. He is a religious king. His prayers are beautiful. They are not only models of the best in literature, but better still, they are the sincere effusions of a devout spirit. They are the utterances of a soul that is conscious of its utter dependence upon God.

More swiftly than He takes others, God takes this young man over the highroad of life, in order that he may observe that "the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"; and also, that he may see the pitfalls along the great highway of life in which many have perished miserably.

Solomon's Book of Proverbs is the outcome of this journey of inspection with God. It contains the epitomized meaning of life. If a young man could master its contents—if he were able to transform these pithy sayings into will-power—his feet would never slip.

It would always be morning in his soul. He would always be travelling upon the highroad. The shining heights would always beckon him. As in a beautiful dream he would reach his goal—without so much as a bruised foot, or a thorn in the flesh.

It would never be evening and dark. It would always be morning and light. The sun would scarcely have risen to his eyes before he would find himself standing before the gates of the City of Rapture, where he sighs not a sigh of relief because a troublesome journey is over, but only feels a higher, and deeper, and serener, and a perfectly peaceful happiness crowd his heart as he passes through the gates into the full glory of his Lord.

How dangerous the path of a young man is who is born an heir, or who seeks to be an heir, may be seen from the latter part of the life of Solomon. The wise king had a better knowledge of things, and especially of life, than

most of his contemporaries. He knew the right way. He also knew where the pitfalls were; but knowledge alone has never yet made a man great, or kept him great.

The great majority of criminals, when first they enter the gloomy gates of the penitentiary, are young men; and young men who possess a great deal of knowledge. Their knowledge alone, however, was unable to keep them upon the right path. What was lacking in their make-up was *will-power*, otherwise called *backbone*, to put into practice right instincts, and beautiful prayers, and wise proverbs.

The fact that he was born an heir contributed largely to the fall of Solomon. His luxurious throne made him flabby. His luxurious bed made him think a great deal of his body. And then came that which ninety-nine times out of a hundred comes to the wealthy young man—*women.*

The luxurious palace of Solomon becomes the dormitory of women—all of them beautiful, not all of them good. And this man, who, as a young man, began so well, but who was handicapped from his birth because he was born an heir, now heard his brain sing throughout all the long days which he spent upon his luxurious couch, and throughout all the long nights which he spent upon his luxurious bed, the erotic song, at first voluptuously sweet, afterwards eating into his brain with the unquenchable thirst of the fire of passion, *The Body! The Body! The Body!*

The great Solomon, wasting his body upon women! Thus by degrees the light is growing dimmer in his mind. Thus the soul of the young man, which was given power by God to wing its way into the sunlight, now begins its plunge into thick darkness. After the inevitable aftermath of the service of the flesh has come, when his flabby body

has prostrated mind and soul, the great Solomon, as for a last time he attempts to rally his mental powers to look at life, can only cynically exclaim, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

It is strange, the manner in which the wheel of life goes round. Today those who are born heirs and are wealthy and who live in luxury, are on top. Tomorrow they are at the bottom—in poverty. The whole thing is really monotonously sad. The riches which are inherited, for which one has not sweat and bled, which the young man misuses to abuse his body and to damn his soul, are the treacherous things which cause his feet to slip, which hurl him back to the place of the day-laborer—the place where his ancestors began.

If he only has some sense and some brains left, he can learn a fine lesson in the course of his fall: that it is not always a blessing to be born an heir; that more often it is a curse; that a great opportunity is afforded the young man who is still looking up from the lowest to the highest rung of the ladder; that capacity for and willingness to work, and toil, and sweat, are great things; that these build in three dimensions—body, mind, and soul; that no doubt the greater opportunity is on top, provided one does not forget and neglect the things which enable him to climb the ladder—work, industry, buoyant strength, the result of the joy of accomplishing.

The sun of Solomon's life need not have set in disaster, if the motto of his life had been that of Agur, who evidently learned much from the checkered career of King Solomon,

> "Give me neither poverty nor riches;
> Feed me with the food that is needful for me:
> Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah?
> Or lest I be poor, and steal,
> And use profanely the name of my God."

Chapter X

THE YOUNG MAN WHO COULD TELL THE FUTURE

WHEN some years ago sport writers told the story in the newspapers of the unusual conduct of the players on a college football team, who knelt down in prayer just before the kick-off, a very orthodox elder of the church opined that the thing could not be done.

We don't see any reason why such a thing can't be done, or shouldn't be done, for that matter. The venerable elder himself, very likely, never played football. He didn't know anything of the whirlwind variety of emotions which surge in the breast of a college man immediately before an important athletic contest.

The respectable churchman evidently never himself felt the nervous suspense which comes over the picked fellows just before they go into the game. He evidently doesn't realize how strongly these young athletes desire to play a good game themselves as individuals, or to what degree they wish to make a good showing against their opponents in order that the honor of the old college may be upheld.

The feeling is akin to that which takes hold of the business man who is about to make a great decision which involves millions of dollars. It is a feeling of utter helplessness. It is the state of mind which should always precede prayer. It doesn't necessarily make for orthodoxy

of a certain type; but it does make for prayer which is powerful and sincere.

It is a rather unusual thing that a young man should pray. We believe that there are a great many young men who do pray. Nevertheless, prayer in a young man is a very striking thing. Prayer is natural for an old man in whose body the fires of passion have died down. Prayer is natural for him whose life-flame is burning at the base; whose mind returns to the helplessness of childhood; who feels himself tottering upon the brink of the Great Unknown.

When the doors of death stand ajar, and the thick shafts of darkness begin to reach out for one—then it is natural to pray; but when the sun is just rising above the tops of the trees; when in a gloriously young body the life-blood courses red, and swift, and mad; when muscles are atingle with overflowing energy; when blood calls to blood, and passion makes the brain reel—then prayer is an entirely different matter. Then it is unnatural that one should pray.

For the great army of young men whose great bodies are vibrating with energies and powers which bid them to rely upon no one but themselves—for the great army of praying young men let us fervently thank God, even though these young men do not always pray in orthodox fashion.

Daniel, the young Hebrew exile, is an even more unusual young man. He has formed the habit of praying three times a day. His face, while praying, is turned toward Jerusalem. There are gods in Chaldea, in Babylon. There is the god of brutal force. There is the god, called man, without a soul. There is the god of the stomach. There is the god of bestial passion and lust.

There is the god of money. There is the god of ambition. Young Daniel does not pray to any of these.

He lifts up his eyes, away from men and gods and things which inhabit that fertile Mesopotamian valley, to the hills of Sion whence he expects his help; from God, whose presence dwells in the temple at Jerusalem; from the God of his fathers, who has a record for deliverances and help, for establishing justice and righteousness, for creating the desire for holiness and purity in the human heart, for manifesting mercy and grace unto thousands.

It is truly wonderful what that prayer habit does for Daniel. At the court of Nebuchadnezzar, the despot of the Chaldeans, Daniel stands out a unique figure. That voluptuous court lives day in and day out only for the body. Lives are lived out fast and furious. Handsome young men and beautiful young women forfeit their youth for one mad season. They waste the beauty of their young lives in a few nights of debauchery and sin.

As in the morning the caretaker throws out from the smelly ballroom the cut flowers which, for one gay night, have lavished all their fragrance upon the seekers of pleasure—thus the Chaldean chamberlains see to it that those amongst the hordes of gay dancers, whose beauty is beginning to fade, are sent back to their dark places, so that there may be before the eyes of the king and his women only the delicious delusion of youth which ever stays fresh.

And, as the steers are fattened in the royal stables, thus young men and young women are compelled to pamper their bodies with rich food, in order that the strength of their wantonness may never wane for a moment.

But Daniel is a praying young man. His regular prayer habits keep his mind pure, and clean, and fresh,

like the rooms of a dwelling through which at regular times sweep gales of fresh air. His clean mind enables Daniel to think. He witnesses not only the gayety of beautiful youth which enters the gates of the palace, but he also notices the constant stream of wrecked, and spoiled, and diseased lives, which are made to slink out unnoticed under cover of darkness, to end their miserable existences, and to die like rats in their burrows. And his prayer habit enables Daniel to see that it is folly to pamper the body. It gives him backbone to say so in the face of the king.

His prayer habit proves for Daniel to be the best investment of his whole life. It not only enables him to know the laws of life, and to have moral strength and sublime heroism in the face of oriental despotism, and, what must often seem certain death; but the habit of prayer, continued day after day, trains the mind of Daniel after a manner as no mind at the court of Nebuchadnezzar is being trained.

The mind of a young man is a precious possession. The problem is to find out what his mind is able to do for a young man. The tragedy is that many men and women will find out what really great things their minds could have enabled them to do, only then when they have arrived upon the other side where there is mostly memory—also remorse. And the greater tragedy of many is that they will never find out that the mind is the gateway to lasting joy.

Daniel's mind, as it is engaged in prayer three times a day, draws ever nearer unto God, the Source of all which is really worth while knowing. He experiences that God means what He says. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

Little by little the prayer-trained mind of Daniel begins

to penetrate deeper into that which man is pleased to call mysteries. His association with God teaches Daniel that there are laws which govern the body and the mind of man; that certain bodily, moral, and spiritual causes always produce certain results. That becomes as clear to Daniel as two and two are four.

His comprehension of prayer is not the acceptance of an axiom. He knows it to be a fact, to produce results. And as the laws of God with regard to the individual are irrevocable, thus God rules with the same laws the nations.

It really need not surprise us that in that fateful night, when the drunken Belshazzar detects the startling handwriting upon the wall of the palace, and calls all his wise men to explain the mystery—all these men, the king himself included, have not the mind to decipher the warning of an outraged God; but the message is clear to Daniel.

It is rather unnatural for a young man to pray; but it is not an impossibility. Besides, it is the only and sure way to real success. In a sense, every praying young man can become an inspired young man like Daniel. When others are dreaming, or, when, in the day of calamity, they frantically beat the air, he sees with open eyes and reads the mystery and its meaning, because he has been in God's training-school of prayer. He stands unafraid because through praying he has learned to know, and to believe, and, therefore, to love, God.

Only the praying young man is the really wide-awake young man. Only when young men are wide-awake in that sense, do they behold the great glory: of God, of man, redeemed and purified by prayer; of the service God bids them render their fellow-men.

Chapter XI

THE YOUNG MAN WHO IS GREATEST

A YOUNG man need not worry if he does not measure up to the perfection of the figure shown on the fashion-plate. Many of God's picked young men have been very indifferent, very irreverent, even, in their attitude toward the fashion-plate. In regard to this, one of them said, "The fashion of this world passeth away," but the Word of God abideth forever.

The Bible calls fashions *appearances*. They are nothing more than phantoms, shadows; the shadow of somebody or something which is not always like God. The devotees of the fashion-plate are ever in danger of attenuating into phantoms and appearances, as far as character is concerned; of seeming that which in reality they are not.

John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, is odd. It is impossible to deny it. Imagine the disappointment and chagrin of the elite from Jerusalem, after they have heard that a great prophet has arisen whose revival meetings are very successful. When they go to see him at Bethabara beyond Jordan, they see a young man, not dressed according to the prevailing style, in soft clothing and fine raiment. They see a gaunt young giant whose only garment over his body-tunic consists of the shaggy hide of a camel.

His food is very primitive. You may know it by looking at the lean face of John. His food is not prepared

for him in a domestic science department: so many calories, so much protein, so many carbohydrates, and some sweetmeat for the rounding off of the contour of the body.

John the Baptist boards himself. There is not an ounce of surplus fat on him. He is ignorant of indolence, and ease, and bodily comfort. He does not covet them. He does not need them. He has a work to do—a great work. He works at it with all his might. He preaches the coming of the kingdom of God.

His speech is tremendous. At least, that is the way it sounds in the ears of the theological doctors who have come down from Jerusalem to sample John's doctrine. The learned doctors, who are in the habit of purring forth softly their theological findings, are astonished. This youth shouts forth his message with a tremendous voice which has the penetrating power of the blast of a trumpet.

John disregards conventional rhetorical rules. He does not follow a set speech, with a honeyed introduction and an appealing peroration. He just speaks. He just shouts. He just preaches. He hits straight from the shoulder.

He strikes fear in the hearts of his hearers. Men, long hardened in sin, involuntarily dodge, as the Baptist hurls forth his thunders. Women, who have been sinned against more than they have sinned themselves, weep softly, as they see John's picture of truth, righteousness, and judgment, with the bad, and the sad, and the base things of life eliminated; and the fine, moral and spiritual things of life, which a woman's heart intuitively craves, glorified.

Even the Pharisees gasp, as the lightning shafts of John's words strike in. "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees, therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge

his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

John has a message. It is an unusual message. His critics agree to that; but, then, this young man, John, is odd. He is the young man of the axe and the fire, of the cutting, and the threshing, and the burning; of the white truth and the white life.

John knows no compromise. He is strongly positive in the preaching of his negative message. He is patiently waiting for God to do that which he feels must be done. He is oddly different from the Pharisee, the Sadducee. He is different from Jesus. Nevertheless, John the Baptist is one of God's picked young men.

Jesus bestows upon this kind of a young man a most glorious title. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Christ calls John the greatest young man that ever lived. It is for this reason that a young man need not despair, even though he is conscious that he has not the lineaments of the world's fashion-plate.

God's picked young men have often come clothed in figurative camel's skin and subsisting upon the simplest of fares. The simple life is apt to exercise a wholesome influence upon character. It is often the outcome of character which has become stripped of non-essentials.

John's is a simple character, but it is an upstanding, manly one. There is not one superfluous ounce of moral flabbiness and worldly conceit in it. It is all moral muscle and sinew. It yearns with a fierce yearning for the truth. That kind of character built the greatest of young men.

In the making of His picked young men God is not first of all depending upon learning, and refinement, and culture. That does not mean that God deems these things

superfluous. God's Holy Spirit *is* learning, and refinement, and culture, of the perfect order. In this respect John the Baptist is not perfect, not all-comprehensive, of the perfect character. But that need not be, in order that one may become the greatest young man. For God's great young men, each one of them separately, are but the segments of God's co-ordinate, perfect whole. The point at issue is, that John the Baptist is eminently useful in the performance of the great task God has entrusted to him.

John the Baptist is the greatest of young men in still another respect. It is problematic that in the years before Jesus comes to John to be baptized, the latter has learned much about Jesus. Still, of all the great crowd which congregates at the ford of Jordan, the young man, John, is the first one and the only one, to see and to believe. He points away from himself and from his gospel. He points out Jesus to the multitude: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

That is remarkable: the young man, John, seeing what here no one else has seen as yet; what only the Father knows and understands; what the angels are desiring to look into; what the prophets have earnestly hoped for—the redemption of man by God in the person of Jesus—this John the Baptist sees and believes. I can easily understand why Jesus calls John the greatest of young men.

John is great because he knows the Person, and he knows the process, of redemption from sin. If a young man is to be a Jesus-man, he cannot slip in by the back door carrying all his luggage of self-righteousness and conceit upon his back.

The Pharisees are planning to go that way. John warns them. He is truly the one who prepares the way for the Savior-Christ. "Repent ye! Make the paths of your life

straight! Throw off your silken garments of self-sufficiency! Put on the garment of penitence. Come to Jesus, the Holy, Eternal Son of God! Come with your character stripped! Come with an honest heart, even though it is a heart full of sin! But come! Come to Jesus, the Savior, your Savior!"

The great young man remains great even in his doubts. Scholars and critics have taken it very much amiss of John, the forerunner of Christ, that he sends his disciples to Jesus with the impatient demand, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Jesus does not upbraid John for this. He understands the impatience of the young man. Neither character nor faith is made perfect in one day.

John's impatience grew out of his ignorance with regard to Christ's method of redemption. John is for cutting. Jesus is for saving. John is for immediate threshing and winnowing. Jesus states that the day for winnowing has not yet come. But Jesus understands.

John is in prison. Jesus understands every young man who is in the prison of doubt. He does not ignore the impatient clamoring of His picked young men. He does not condemn their eagerness. He encourages them. He sends them a bit of good news. "Don't despair, John, The good work is going on. The blind receive their sight. The lame walk. The lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear. The dead are raised up. The poor have the gospel preached to them."

As the imprisoned John hears that, upon his drawn, pallid face appears a smile. "Well, that is good enough. If that sort of thing is going on outside of my prison, then He is truly the Christ, the great Christ." And Jesus, as He knows that John believes in spite of his doubts, holds up John as an example for His picked young men. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

Chapter XII

THE YOUNG MAN WHO BEGAN AS A SON-OF-THUNDER

BENJAMIN Franklin and his kite are considered great because they first began to harness the lightning. Our age is called great. It is called the electric age because we are able to render lightning docile like a lamb. But many transforming instruments are needed before one succeeds to pare off forked lightning so thin that it will be content to shine imprisoned in the vacuum of an electric light bulb.

Jesus proves Himself supremely great, shows Himself the Mighty Transformer of potential energy of a far higher order than electricity, when He takes in hand John, one of the sons of Zebedee; John, called otherwise one of the Sons-of-Thunder.

There are many sons-of-thunder amongst young men; blustering, overweening, unattractive characters, whose violent traits sometimes betoken serious moral defect. But quite often also these high-tensioned young men respond to stimuli in that explosive manner only because of an exuberance of character vitality, which, under right leadership, may become a thing of great usefulness and beauty. It was not only the father of John, Zebedee, who transmitted to his son a temper which in many respects was diametrically opposed to the spirit of Jesus; but his mother also, thinking the coming King of Israel was to be greatly in need of zestful lieutenants, kept the fires that smouldered

in John's being supplied with the fuel of ambition, and secretly intrigued to have the stalwart son given a high office in the new kingdom, where his explosive zeal might have free scope for action and development.

Mothers, in the planning of the lives of their sons, sometimes are foolish. They are thinking in terms of power of the flesh-and-blood kind, when they map out the future for their sons. They are not seeing the finer thing, nor do they recognize the way in which God fashions His kings. Young men, even of the sons-of-thunder type, are not to be kings already in their late teens and early twenties. God's kings are first to be trained as priests. The royal thrones in God's kingdom come not before, but after, the ministry at the altar of sacrificial service.

Yet even in the life story of John the disciple is demonstrated the glory of the power of Jesus' Spirit in His ability to refashion character, in spite of the drawbacks of heredity, environment, and the harmful influence of a foolish mother. For John, in due course of time, becomes one of the gentlest of Jesus' followers. In his latter days no friction is able to set agoing that former pyrotechnic display of temper, and the rumblings of a loud tongue.

John becomes the disciple whom Jesus loved. That, in itself, is not strange, because it is the love of Jesus for those imperfect and sinful that is His most glorious characteristic. In that sense Jesus loved all the twelve. But in John there must have been something because of which Jesus felt drawn to intimate companionship with this youth. Perhaps this love of Jesus for John was the great compassion with which Jesus regards every young man of violent temper and manners, and the rejoicing of the Master, as He takes notice of his manful struggle to overcome his handicap. Among his fellowmen, even amongst the older

of his brethren, the son-of-thunder may be "sat down on" for his repulsive traits of character. But in Jesus he always will find the great Sympathizer, Encourager, and Lover.

Jesus loved John because He saw how earnestly he tried to overcome. I think John's character became transformed so gloriously, first, because something he saw had made him think. Sons-of-thunder are noted much more for their talking than for their thinking. But as John sees the startling contrast which existed between his extreme character and that of Jesus, he could not help but think. He studies minutely the character of his Master. It must have chilled John's heart as he heard Jesus say of Himself, "He shall not cry, nor lift up His voice, nor cause it to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed He shall not break, and a smoking flax He shall not quench." "So that is the character of Jesus," John is remarking to himself. And as he looks within his own heart, he sees how far Jesus and John are still apart! Yet, happy the young man, who, seeing Jesus, is led to think, and to compare, and to despair.

For thinking, and comparing, and despairing, as a result of considering Jesus, leads to talking with Him. Undoubtedly, in that little circle of disciples with their Master, John first began to feel the need of prayer. Blustery young men, violent young men, young men of the sons-of-thunder type, before they come face to face with Jesus, are not famous for praying. But, in the company of Jesus, John first learns to pray. Prayer, learnt thus, is the greatest character builder. It gives one an unobstructed view of God. It is the time and the means that renders one honest with himself. It is the moment when one is given courage to smite many a hideous idol of self. It is the channel through which pours a stream of power into the

young man's soul, that enables him to rebuild after the similitude of the character of Jesus.

John's prayer life was different from that of the young man of this day, because John was able to talk face to face with Christ. I have no doubt but that there was many a conversation carried on between this handicapped young disciple and the perfect Master that is unrecorded in the four Gospels. But this is a unique feature of the Gospel according to John, that therein are recorded the great majority of the words which Jesus spoke. The transformation of John's character through his association with Jesus is so striking because instead of remaining the blustering talker, John, as Jesus speaks, becomes the close listener. Intently John must have listened whenever Jesus spoke, for his gospel sounds the depths of the character of Jesus.

There is no better way to learn to know a man's character, and, if worthy, to become influenced by it, than to talk with him. It is a fine thing to possess an oil painting, done by a Rembrant, of the face of a great man. It is interesting to read letters which great men wrote. It is informing to read biographies and histories, to notice the reaction of the characters of these great men upon others. But it is a vastly greater thing to be able to speak to a great man, and to hear him speak. For it is then that one comes into the possession of that which neither oil-painting, nor letter, nor biography is able to yield, namely the touch of the soul of the man, as it comes through the lilt of the voice, and the look of the eye, and the gesture of the body. It is fine for a young man with handicaps to know Jesus. It is well to go and listen and hear what men have to say about Him when they preach. But it is better to come face to face with Jesus, and to talk to Him about things, and character, and life; or to sit at the feet

of His Spirit, who will teach a young man all he needs to know about the One who redeems from the power of sin.

John, moreover, received of that power of Jesus that redeems him from his blustering self, by *doing* for Christ. John never became the fiery crusader that Paul was. John did not come into the possession of that peculiar power which was Peter's, to hurl into the hands of Jesus the stones that went into the building of the spiritual temple. But John, much more than either of these two fellow workers, became like his Master, the Good Shepherd. In his work in the churches, the life of John came into close contact with the needy lives of the flock, the lives of others, that daily manifested their need of Jesus, the Shepherd. It was in the exercise of the power of gentleness which Jesus bestowed upon John, that the tension of the lightnings and the peals of thunder in John's soul became gradually subdued and silenced so that he was better able to hear God speak to him. Unless a young man of the sons-of-thunder type also makes use of the new power by which Jesus transforms character he is waiting in vain for the time when the lightnings of his soul shall have become chained and the loud peals of thunder in his soul silenced. It is John, a son of Boanerges, who remembered so well that which Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Almost at the close of his life John becomes greatest, when, in exile upon Patmos, he sees, better than at any time before, how truly great Jesus is. At Patmos John sees, as it were, the reverse side of the character of Jesus. In the days of Jesus in the flesh John became impressed with the gentleness, and the forbearance, and the love of Him who, while upon earth, of necessity must be the suf-

fering servant of God, of whom Isaiah foretold, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." But when in Patmos, John sees the other side of the character of Jesus. John sees his Master as the Conqueror, resplendent in heavenly glory. He sees the great Son of God marching at the head of His militant Church in every period of its existence. He sees Jesus smiting His foes on every side, bidding His Church to follow Him over battlefields of mighty contest and terrible conflict. He sees the glorious Christ lead His white-robed army home.

The sight of that effulgent glory of the King Immortal momentarily dazes John. He does not recognize the Master of the days of his youth. He falls down at the feet of Jesus, as one dead. But the Master of John's youth is not changed. He is ever the same—yesterday, today, and forever. For by and by John sees Christ sitting upon a throne, but He bears the marks of the sacrifice which He accomplished for the sin of man. Jesus is still the Lamb of God. And John hears an angel say, how even in heaven the Lamb is the Shepherd who feeds His flock. I think that it is because of his intimate knowledge of Jesus, the unchanging Shepherd of youth, that the apostle comes to write the biography of Jesus in this beautiful fashion, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

And because John knows the heart of his Master, he has a bit of wonderful encouragement for every young man who begins his career in the impossible way of a son-of-thunder, as he points out the certainty of complete transformation for all those who believe in the power of Jesus.

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Chapter XIII

THE ONE-TRACK YOUNG MAN

ABOUT this one-track young man thousands of books have been written. Over nineteen hundred years ago he died; still, men have not forgotten him. Next to Jesus and the Baptist, his life and character loom up so high above that of his fellow-men that no distance of time can cause him to disappear below the horizon of man's recollection.

This shows conclusively that a young man need not strive to be a master in every field of endeavor in order that he may find a place among the immortals. It proves conclusively that, even though versatility must not be discounted, it is nevertheless better for a young man to be a one-track young man like Paul.

If Paul had wanted he could have been a master in many spheres of activity. It is really remarkable that in all the many writings of Paul one never finds him playing the role of scientist. It would have been vastly interesting to see Paul take the field against the materialistic science of his day; to see him break a lance with the followers of Democritus, Zeno, and Epicurus; to have had him apply his erudition to produce a scientific textbook on the origin of the universe and of man written from the point of view of a Christian.

Paul is not a theologian in the sense of the later church fathers who refined the art of dogmatizing. Even in his

theology Paul is a one track man. Paul might have chosen to be a great poet. He *is* one—but not in the sense of the rhymster, who labors for days to fashion pleasing phrases and to cut verse-lines to measure. Paul writes the greatest poem ever written. His lyric of love, in his letter to the Corinthians, is immortal. It is a gem of literary, ethical, moral, and spiritual beauty, flung red-hot from the soul that is aflame with the experience of the love of Christ.

Paul might have been an historian or biographer of no mean ability. He comes in close contact with kings and emperors. He lives in their times. He has the advantage of looking at men, things, and conditions, from the point of view of detachment, for Paul is a Christian in a pagan world. His citizenship is in heaven.

Paul might have been a great politician. It requires no little skill to organize and administer the many Christian churches which have been formed from a constituency which is largely Gentile, and, therefore, strange to the genus of the Christian faith.

Paul might have been a captain of industry, or a builder of skyscrapers, bridges and railroads: for his being throbs with fierce energies. All these possibilities were in Paul—a potential versatility, and if he had chosen, each talent might have been developed to an unusual degree.

Instead, Paul considers it all refuse, worse than refuse, for the one thing in which he believes. And his faith makes of him a great man, even though, judged according to modern standards, Paul began a one-track young man. It is safe for a young man to copy the great apostle, even though he is a one-track man.

Young men have looked up to Paul with awe. They have spoken of his conversion with awe. To become a Christian, if it had to be done after Paul's manner, has

seemed to them to approximate the impossible. However, in this young men are needlessly shy of The Way because they see upon it the footprints of the great apostle.

Paul's conversion is not strange at all. It is not the mystical thing, the incomprehensible thing, the thing that first must disturb, confuse, even blot out, a young man's mind, blot out his very being, in order that, from the pulverized dust of self, the Creator may fashion a man, new in every essential, the contrast in every detail of the old man.

It is not the thing which happens to Paul in his conversion. It is not Paul's religious experience. I suppose there is a great difference between the Saul of Tarsus, as the white light of Christ's holiness first strikes him down, and the Paul of a few hours later.

The young Pharisee who starts from Jerusalem upon the Damascus road, is a human bullet. The significant thing in Paul's conversion is not in Paul, but is in Christ; that He catches, barehanded, that human bullet which comes whizzing his way, and turns it around to cause it to fly in the opposite direction.

The minute Paul is converted, he does not begin to twaddle about his conversion in a manner calculated to sicken every red-blooded young man. Paul remains the human bullet. Because Paul *is* a human bullet Christ lies in wait to catch it.

Christ can use young men who have the drive, and the speed, and the penetrating power of a bullet. Christ does not smash the splendid make-up of the energetic Paul. Christ desires him to remain the human bullet. Christ wants him to remain energetic. Christ wants him to remain the young man. The young man whom Christ catches and converts He does not compel to wriggle through an un-

natural change; to instantly become like an aged lady who serenely twiddles her thumbs in her lap.

The instant Paul is converted he cries out with fierce energy, "Lord, what wilt thou have me *do?*" The *doing* is the life of Paul, as it is the life of every young man. Christ does not spurn that idea. In many respects the exclamation of Paul shows that the cart is before the horse. Nevertheless, it is a splendid way to start out. Christ knows it. He is the greatest knower of men, of motives, of ideals. He knows how to handle the young man who is full of pep of the high order.

Christ is wise. He is possessed of infinite wisdom. Christ does not put Paul in charge of an old, well established church at Jerusalem, where he has nothing to do but preach of Sabbaths, baptize the babies, marry the young couples, and bury the dead.

This Paul is still breathing and threatening slaughter, but not now against the disciples of the Lord, but against the disciples of the devil, against the prince of the world. Paul is still a human bullet. And Christ lets this human bullet go for its goal. He gives it plenty of room, plenty of distance.

Christ makes Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. He shows him vast lands, and wide oceans, and plains with a far, distant horizon, and steep and lofty mountain ranges standing astride his path, and rushing mountain torrents, and world-cities, teeming with souls and reeking with the stench of sin. And Christ is saying to Paul, "Go to it now, Paul. The field is the world. It is yours—yours alone, for the doing. And in the doing fashion yourself the ideal Christian."

And the human bullet speeds on its way—the long, dusty, sun-blinded, interminable highway of the world. The

exhilaration of the mighty task multiplies the apostle's energies seven fold. There seems no limit to his power, his strength, his endurance. He can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. He mounts up with wings as eagles. He runs and is not weary. He walks and does not faint.

Paul finds what Ponce de Leon sought in vain; the elixir of youth. He remains the young man, for he has a task which fits in with his capacities, his energies, his ambitions. On he goes, ever on, upon the one track which Christ has laid out for him, in order that he may perform that which he asked of Christ, *to do*.

In the doing Christ makes perfect the character of this young man. Finally, as Paul grows older, but older only in time, as he looks back, he can trace his journeys over the face of the world, with a crimson, three-strand line. There is Antioch, and Cyprus, and Pamphylia, and Joppa, and Cæsarea, and Iconium, and Lystre, and Derbe, and Ephesus, and Galatia, and Colosse, and Troas, and Macedonia—Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Spain—and finally Italy and Rome.

There another hand catches the human bullet. It is an iron hand—a cruel hand, but the force of the bullet is far from spent. It stings in the hand of Agrippa, and of Festus, and of Nero; but the bullet is caught. Rome marks the limit of the world Paul has conquered for Christ. However, unlike another young man who was given the world for the field upon which to spend his energies, Paul does not weep as he sees no more worlds to conquer for Christ; but unlike Alexander, after the *doing* is over, Paul imprisoned, becomes contemplative.

He observes that in the frenzy of doing he has for the most part looked away from his own self. There is danger

in that. In prison he learns to look more to himself—within. Then Paul notices that the man of God is not complete in the doing only. Then it becomes his fierce ambition *to become, to be,* also. It is his daily prayer that Christ may attain form within him.

That, after all, is the fullness of the Christian ideal; but Christ is content if the young man is willing to try out his energies upon the one-track road—*if he wills to do.* For in the doing Christ fashions the complete man of God.

Chapter XIV

THE YOUNG MAN WITH A YELLOW STREAK

IT IS queer how great Christians, in spite of their greatness, nevertheless have been wrong in their convictions. A preacher was advising a vacant church how to gauge candidates for the pulpit of that church, which was considered an important one in that denomination.

"Look at the man's record in college." As if that really meant very much. As if it were not possible that a man should pass through divers changes and grow to be a bigger and better man as time goes on. As if it were not necessary for a young man who enters upon the work of the gospel ministry to be constantly reborn, to be renewed in his mind day by day. As if it were not necessary for a man, engaged in Christ's work, to recognize the fact that the thing which leads into larger power and the real greatness of the Servant of Christ is a repeated conversion.

A college record is of some value, to be sure, but it is not all. Paul's record before his conversion is not altogether recommendable, neither is the record of the young man, Moses. Many great men of God were scamps while in God's preparatory school. Some men who are doing the biggest work in the world today—the salvaging of submerged souls in city rescue missions—were men whom God picked up out of the gutter.

It is to the everlasting glory of God that He is making use of young men who began rather lamely. It is an elo-

quent commentary upon the imperfection of human nature that the greatest among Christ's brethren at times can be very narrow-minded.

We do not expect Paul to be narrow-minded. He himself has suffered much at the hands of the near-sighted members of the Jerusalem church. Paul ought to know. Nevertheless, he is narrow-minded, low-visioned, inflexible, when it comes to the case of John Mark. There seems to be a reason.

John Mark begins badly. He starts out in the worst way a young man can start out in. He has that which absolutely unfits him to be one of God's picked young men. John Mark has a yellow streak running through his character. That is about the worst letter of introduction a young man can carry along when he is starting out into the world. Yellow is a color which is as hard to get out of human character as the black of sin. It tells the same story, which the white flag of surrender, which the traitor waves in battle, tells.

Paul, the human bullet, goes on a straight course. He is unable to conceive of anyone in the ranks of Christ's army who does not, and who still can be good for something. Paul turns down John Mark. He does not give him one word of encouragement. He is not willing to give him a second chance. His condemnation of John Mark is final. In this the greatest of preachers is so unlike his Master, who is always willing to give a second chance, and a third, and a fourth, to the young man who has begun badly.

John Mark is not a worthless young man, even though he begins in a bad way, and has a yellow streak running through him. He is not a low breed—that which denies a young man a place in the ranks of humanity—a char-

acterless young man. John Mark is impulsive. He is apt to act hastily. He never really chooses. He just plunges.

He has not the deep-seated convictions of older men. Moreover, it is highly probable that he is a spoiled only son. He is reared in comparative luxury. His widowed mother's home is spacious and comfortable enough to serve as the meeting place of the leaders of the Jerusalem church.

The opinions and the mental habits of these sedate, mature men and women enter into the make-up of John Mark. The problems of the well-appointed church at Jerusalem are discussed and worked out in a leisurely way. The minister, James, and his elders, are speaking patronizingly about the work that is being done among the Gentiles by Paul and Barnabas. For them it is a side-issue. The real work is in Jerusalem.

John Mark agrees with them in this; but there is something in the work of Paul, and that of John Mark's uncle, Barnabas, which appeals to the young man. In spite of the fact that his place as a member of the Jerusalem church is comfortable, he cannot help but feel at times that his position is a bit cramped.

John Mark is a young man. He has the restless temperament of youth. At times, when he is not thinking of the church, he tells himself that Jerusalem is monotonous. The open road appeals to him. The vast spaces beckon him.

The measureless distances which Paul traverses challenge the mettle of the high-spirited John Mark. Taking into consideration the conditions of his time, Paul was being looked upon as a globe-trotter, and as such appealed to the imagination of a young man like John Mark.

What spirited young man does not hanker for experience like that of Paul? And what impulsive young man, after he has taken the open road, when night comes on, and he is forced to spend his first night out under the stars —as he lies sleepless and shivering upon the hard ground— does not stealthily think of the comfortable home he has left?

At Perga John Mark turns back. The country beyond is infested with robbers. The marshes and swamps breed the deadly malaria mosquito. In the crisis his yellow streak asserts itself with disastrous results. John Mark disappears. That bad beginning of the young man makes Paul resolve never again to have anything to do with a young man who has a yellow streak. When he hears that John Mark has returned with Barnabas to Cyprus, he tells Silas, "I told you so."

Still, Cyprus with its beautiful, cultivated fields, its cultured cities, its ease and comfort, cannot hold John Mark. He is not a dud, as Paul thinks he is. John Mark is in the making. John Mark, the young man with the yellow streak, is in need, not of condemnation, but of sympathy and encouragement. He still dreams of great journeys for Christ, but he dares not launch out for himself in company of a man like Paul.

There are many great Pauls, well-intentioned Pauls, who have spoiled permanently many a John Mark. You find them in every Christian church. You can find them in colleges and universities where they are to mold the character of youth. You can find them in office and factory where they are foremen and masters. You can find them in many a home where fathers and mothers are impatient with little John Marks. It is hard to wipe out the

yellow streak. It is hard to correct a wavering will. The Pauls, the inflexible Pauls, cannot do it.

Peter must come into John Mark's life to build it. Paul is the greater theologian. Peter is the greater humanitarian. Paul goes straight for the mark. He has no time to bother with weaklings like John Mark. Peter has been something like a weakling himself. He finds time to listen to the complaints of the young man who has a weak will. Peter understands John Mark. Peter has sympathy. Sympathy is the thing sorely needed in the church, in the recitation and lecture-room, in the office and factory, in the home.

Paul can speak learnedly about love as he conceives of it in its ideal setting. Peter knows the practical value of love, even though it is not perfect, even though it is only human. He knows of its uplifting power for the fallen. He knows of its encouragement for the disheartened backslider. He knows of the power of love to eliminate the yellow streak from human character. He knows of the penetrating vision of love: for did not Christ see in the traitorous coward, Peter, a hero of faith? Thus the sympathy of the older man who himself has passed through the misery of cowardice, builds anew John Mark.

God delegates a great task to the young man who began with a yellow streak. In the end he is able to outstrip the mighty Paul. God calls John Mark to paint a picture of His great Son, Jesus. When it is done God looks it over, and He deems it of sufficient worth to lift it up before the eyes of all the world unto all generations.

There is nothing in that picture of John Mark himself. And yet there is: for the Gospel according to Mark could never have been written except by one who is conscious of the mighty contrast which exists between himself and

Christ. John Mark, over his own weak, will-less, wavering self, paints the Christ as the Strong, Immortal Son of God.

In his own weakness he has felt the strong, uplifting hand of Jesus. In his own misery and longing, as cowardice threw him, he has felt the compassion and help of Christ whose aim it is to never break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. Peter tells John Mark about the Christ. John Mark believes it. His gospel is the true picture of Christ because it is inspired and directed by a faith which has become fully substantiated by experience. Nothing short of a miracle can get the yellow streak out of a young man's character; but Jesus is the divine miracle worker. He does it.

Chapter XV

THE YOUNG MAN WHOSE FACE WAS LIKE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL

THERE is a twofold impression which one gets when reading the biography of Stephen. The first impression is that Stephen was beautiful. The second, that he was young. These are impressions, not historical facts. Nevertheless, both of these impressions are unavoidable.

The first impression appears to recommend Stephen but little to the real young man. A young man doesn't care to be spoken of as beautiful. Unless he is a "jelly-bean" and is naturally vain, he does not care overly much to be referred to as a handsome young man. The real, upstanding young man is not apt to be vain. And when we mention beauty in connection with a young man, we immediately get the impression of sissiness.

Now there is really nothing of the sissy about Stephen. The sissy may be the centre of attraction in a bevy of silly girls. He is never the predominating figure in a crowd of men. Stephen was that. He was a man filled with power. He did great deeds. He performed great miracles. Stephen was a man of high courage. He faced an angry mob alone, unafraid. A sissy is not apt to show the sterling characteristic of candor. Stephen was frank in the face of a lot of hypocrites. A sissy is not apt to have very strong and deep convictions. Stephen's convictions were strong and deep even unto death.

The beauty of Stephen is not to his discredit. Handsomeness may be a general characteristic of youth. Beauty, the kind Stephen possessed, marks the exceptional young man. Stephen's beauty was of a rare kind. I know nothing of the build of his body. I know nothing of the color of his hair. I know nothing of the complexion of his skin. I know nothing of the gracefulness of his movements. Real, genuine beauty, is not first of all the product of the face-architect or the beauty-doctor. The source of Stephen's beauty was that he was "a man full of the Holy Ghost, of power, and of faith."

Even that does not strike a young man as of first importance. That quality of character, we say, pertains rather to old men: to the men who are past the stormy period of life; who are pious men; who are pillars in the church. A sapling is not supposed to have in it timber for pillars. A young man is not commonly thought of as a subject for the Holy Ghost to fill him with His power.

Still, being full of the Holy Ghost, may be, reverently speaking, the every-day commodity for every young man. The possibility for a young man to become filled with the Holy Ghost is not limited to the times and the generations of the early Christian church. The beauty which came to Stephen was not, in that sense, limited to his own generation. "*Today,*" as the Holy Spirit saith, "harden not your heart." That *today* is permanent, continuous, for this dispensation. It means just what it says. It means that the Holy Ghost speaks to a young man the minute he reads this, the minute he hears the Spirit whisper. The Holy Spirit asks for permission to enter the heart of every young man of every generation.

The Holy Ghost is not especially soliciting the patronage of old men. He stands ready to go with him when a

young man begins his journey of life. He speaks to him when he is only a lad. He stands upon the threshold of every boy's life. The Holy Spirit has a high purpose in mind when he asks a young man's permission to completely fill his being.

The Holy Ghost grieves when he sees a young man start out in life fitted out incompletely; lacking, in his physical, mental and moral being, the most essential element. The Holy Spirit grieves when he sees a young man go his way facing the great impossibility. The great impossibility is this: that a young man will never be a manly young man, a complete young man, like Stephen, unless he becomes a young man full of the Holy Ghost.

You may study the biographies of a hundred young men. As you follow them through life, as you study their development, you will notice that some of them become great men, but only after a fashion; that their lives do not leave the impress of greatness which comes to you when you study the life of Stephen.

The markings of the great impossibility may come out when the name of a supposedly great man is mentioned in a political campaign, or in a divorce scandal, or in the story of a police raid upon a roadhouse, or in the report of an accident happening during a wild ride.

Or the lawyer, or the physician, or the business associates or employees; or his fellow-students, his team-mates; or, perhaps, only his roommate, may discern the marks of the great impossibility upon the unfolding character of a young man—that which prevents him from ever attaining to the highest, and the loftiest, and the best in life. He is great, but only after a fashion. He can never be a beautiful character, and therefore can never be a manly young man like Stephen.

For the fruits of the Holy Spirit in a young man's life are "goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto God." Having "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," but rather reproving them. The Holy Spirit is not "the spirit of fear, but of power and love."

In this sense is the Holy Spirit an every-day commodity, in that He fits into the make-up of the genuine young man, in that the genuine young man can take Him along upon every path where the right kind of young men are found. He can take the Holy Spirit along to the gymnasium and the gridiron. The Spirit will help him to play a clean game. He can take the Holy Spirit along to shop and office. It will make for honesty, diligence, integrity, which pay great dividends: service, promotion, even an increasing salary.

Being filled with the Holy Ghost means that God's own Spirit is with a young man in his off-hours; on the rainy night when time hangs heavy on his hands in his dingy room in his boarding-house; or when he roams the trail with the gang the Holy Spirit will teach him how to remain manly and to steer straight.

Stephen faced harder things than that. With him it was a matter of life and death. Still, his face is not sallow with fear. It shows not the craven look. His enemies, gnashing their teeth, fuming with rage that will not be appeased before they see the crimson of Stephen's life-blood—all of a sudden see the face of the young man illumined as if it were the face of an angel.

Because of this Stephen is beautiful and young. The face of an angel scintillates with the fire of glory because he delights in serving God. Stephen's face is aglow with ineffable glory because he is conscious of his partnership with Christ and the certain results thereof; peace that

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passeth all understanding, great confidence in the moment of deadly danger. Stephen has the face of an angel—that means the youthful look. God's angels know neither birth, nor aging, nor death. They are always young. The young man, who, like Stephen, has his heart filled with the Holy Ghost, will feel his being vibrate with the energies of the Spirit; he will feel his heart throb with the life of God's love. Both of these are eternal. They know not age. They have everlasting youth. They are glorious in their matchless beauty.

To be filled with the Holy Ghost is a rare possession for a young man. It is rare, in that it appears so *unhuman*, so unearthly, so uncommon. So it is—because it is from God; but for every young man who earnestly desires it, the fullness of the Holy Ghost may become his every day possession.

"Today," as the Holy Spirit saith, "harden not your heart."

Chapter XVI

THE PERFECT YOUNG MAN

BECAUSE there never has lived a young man, born of an earthly father and an earthly mother, who was perfect, God exercised forethought and used time to send Jesus to live among men. It goes without saying that mankind takes notice of His coming.

In course of time all the great men stop in the performance of their tasks. The great painters are sending their models away, for their artist's eye detects in Jesus the true model of youth. The sculptors at once do Him in the finest of marble. The poets sing His virtues. They write His name in the liquid language of poetry upon tablets of wax, upon scrolls of papyrus, upon the skins of lambs and sheep.

Monks in their cloistered cells feel their quills tremble as they attempt to write the name of the Perfect Young Man. The printing-presses still continue to rumble night and day; for the Book, which contains the life-story of Jesus, year in, year out, unendingly, continues to be the best seller.

Upon waves of ether the name of Jesus is carried to the ends of the earth. All, because man recognizes it to be a rare privilege to be permitted to look upon the Perfect Young Man, to contemplate the ineffable glory of His youth and manhood, in which there is not a hint of the shady, nor the faintest taint of moral smut.

He is born in Bethlehem, in a stable. He lives in Nazareth. Nazareth is only a wide place in the road. Jesus has for His playmates rude youngsters—the bairns of the boorish natives of the most boorish province of Palestine.

The one they call His father is a carpenter. The Perfect Young Man spends His time as apprentice in the carpenter shop, amongst the men who are rough-hewn and splintery like the beams of cedar which they hew from the shaggy sides of Lebanon. He must listen to their talk, as a crowd of men, who have become intimates, will talk. He hears their guffaws, as an exceptionally bold one of the mates tells his risque tale.

Men have always been that way—the grown-ups—those who have had experience of a kind—they have always been unmindful of the fact that unspoiled youth stands near, that the tares of their speech are blowing over virgin soil.

And still, as He has passed through his real apprentice time, as He is to begin the work of a full-fledged journeyman of building again the temple of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, God Himself calls loudly from heaven, so that men can hear, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

That is a wonderful saying with regard to a young man —that statement of God regarding His Son. That is the miracle of the ages, of all time, that human character should be able to live in a tainted atmosphere and still remain untainted, pure. It is something which awakens joy, even in the heart of God.

How monotonous a sight it must have been for God to see, issuing out of the womb of Time, endless generations of mankind—but all spotted, all tainted, all with the sign of corruption upon them from the start; no one righteous, no one holy, no one good; no one, as he grows up, to turn

his face away in disgust from the thing all delight in—sin; the thing that God hates, because the thing hates God and good with venomous, deadly hatred.

At last One who is different. At last One who is not spotted! At last One whose soul is pure; whose nature is unspoiled; whose character is upright; whose mind is like God's mind. At last appears the Perfect Young Man who cries out, "Behold, I have come to do thy will, O God!" It need not surprise us, that, when God sees the life of Jesus breathe that determination, He himself cries out in glad happiness, "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The way of Jesus, the Perfect Young Man, is not a happy way. It need not surprise us. The surprise of His presence among mankind is too great for those who have been groveling in the dirt of sin all the lifetime of their race. The contrast is too great. The proportion is too overwhelming. One out of millions and millions.

The Light is too pure, too white, too blinding. They turn against Him. They plot against Him. They fall upon Him. His light, His teaching, His life, shows them too much. It shows them the muck of sin in which they have been raking for ages. It shows them how the very dirt upon which they have been feeding has eaten into their bones, has penetrated every particle of their being.

They have become sin of sin. They have become dirt of dirt. They realize the hopelessness of their task as they try to cleanse themselves with hands that are unclean. They realize that their old selves must be utterly destroyed before anything new—with the possibility of cleanness, and whiteness, and purity, and holiness in it—is able to take its place.

And that they will not have done. That they will not permit—let Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness which has healing in his wings, penetrate to their cancerous, sin-eaten selves, to melt, to burn away, the old thing, and to form and develop the new thing. For there is a degree of relish, at least at first, in the ooze, and the slime, and the dirt. It is intoxicating. It is maddening. After a while they do not realize any more why it is necessary that they should be cleansed from sin.

The way of the Perfect Young Man is a hard way. It has been truly called the Via Dolorosa. As a few turn away from the muck, and the dirt, and the slime of sin, and permit Jesus to begin His healing work, at once the Fiend, whose foul members lie sprawled over all God's fair creation, lifts his horrid mien to look at Christ.

He begins to talk with Jesus. He tries Him, as he has been accustomed to try and seduce young men for countless ages; as he has been invariably successful. He tells the Perfect Young Man what he will pay. It is a great, a magnificent wage; for Satan perceives that never before has he directed his wiles against a young man like this One. The prize is the world—but Jesus must give His person—body, mind, and soul—to be fashioned according to the pattern of Satan.

It cannot be denied that it is a mighty temptation for One, who is like every other young man, sin excepted. Satan tempted and got many young men far cheaper; for only one sip from the goblet of lust and pleasure; for the paltry, dishonest sum of money; for the advantage of one lie; for that one cheating; for only one of the million of things with which Satan now baits the Perfect Young Man.

But the young man who has come to do the will of God perfectly, has a clear mind. He does not begin com-

bat with Satan with a mind which is already befuddled because of secret and frequent tampering with sin. Jesus never sins. There is not one opening in His armor. He realizes that the will of the tempter is not the will of God. And it is His purpose, it is His meat and drink, to do the will of God. The mind of Jesus, unclouded by sin, easily sees through the wiles of Satan. The Fiend becomes repulsive to Him who is holy.

Of the low, to Jesus, Satan is the lowest. Of the vulgar, to the pure Young Man the Evil One is the most vulgar. Of the dirty, to Christ he is the dirtiest. Only One is holy, and pure, and good—God. Only One is worth following—body, mind, and soul—God. Jesus does not debate the question with the tempter. He commands, as it is given every young man to command in the hour of temptation, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" That command, spoken in the name of God, with the thought of God in mind, always brings results. Satan departs.

At last the company of the Perfect Young Man becomes so obnoxious to the grovelers, that they nail Him to a cross. They think they have killed Him, that they have succeeded in destroying the pattern of perfection which so annoys and exasperates them. But thanks be to God, the lovely vision of the Perfect Young Man cannot be destroyed; it is not to vanish from before the eyes of mankind.

In those last moments, while life is still in Him, He cries out with a great voice that His task is finished, completely finished. What He means by that we cannot fully know. Paul thinks he knows something about that which Jesus said regarding His task; that He comes to lead many sons on to glory. If that is true, it does not matter that we do not fully understand; it does not matter if even the

wisest of the apostles must admit that the work which Jesus finished is a mystery, if only the finished labor of the Perfect Young Man shall not go unrewarded. In spite of the great mystery, we may know that Jesus speaks the truth.

Through the gossamer veil which lies trembling and heaving upon all human life, we can see the tracings of a new pattern. It is the pattern of the Perfect Young Man's perfect character. Young men are hearing Jesus. Young men believe in Jesus. Young men know and experience that Jesus speaks the truth. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

God promises even beyond that to young men that believe:

> "Beloved, now are we the sons of God,
> And it doth not yet appear what we shall be:
> But we know that, when He shall appear,
> We shall be like Him;
> For we shall see Him as He is."